300-PAGE YEAR-END SPECTACULAR!

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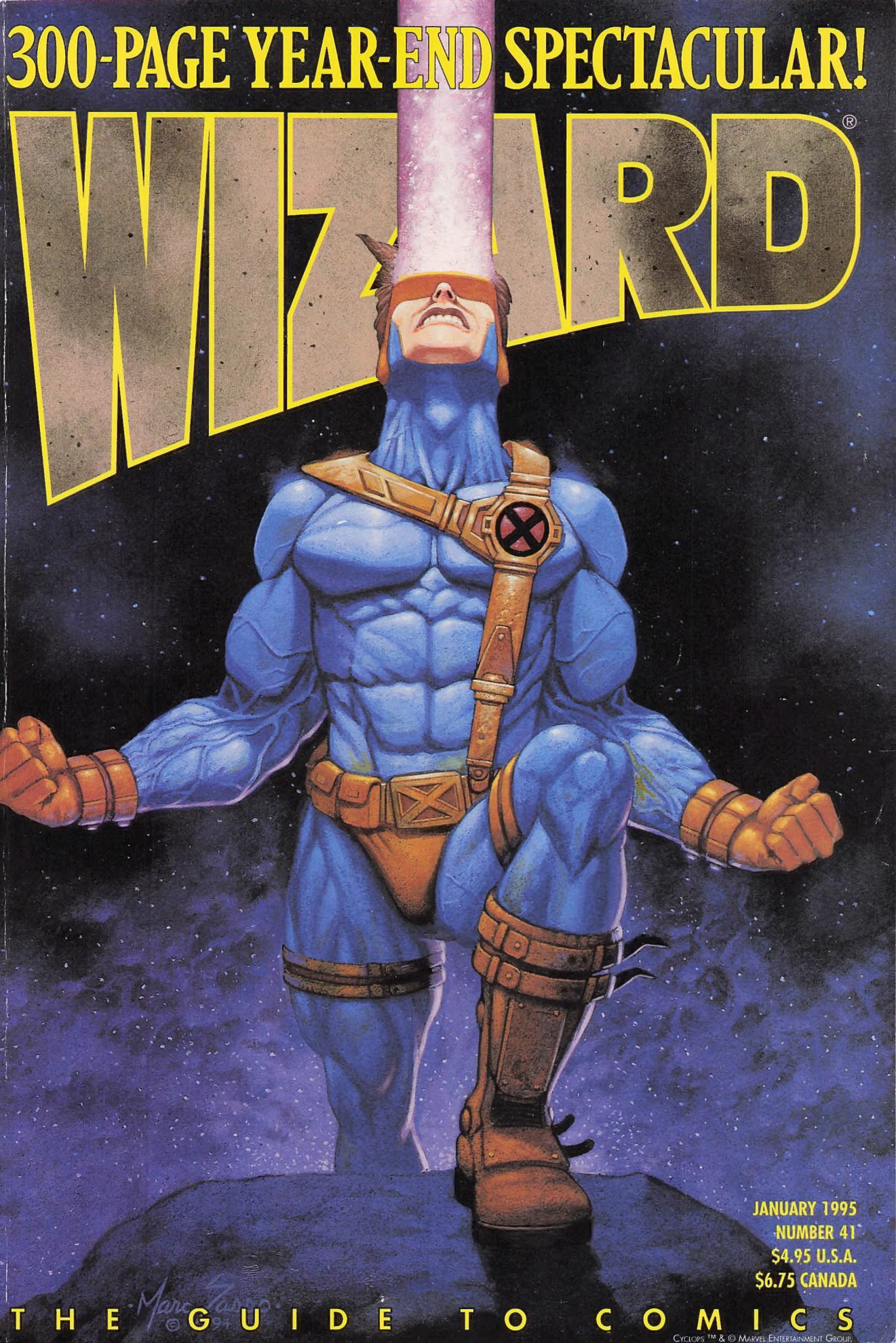

JANUARY 1995
NUMBER 41
$4.95 U.S.A.
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THE GUIDE TO COMICS

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Number 41
January 1995

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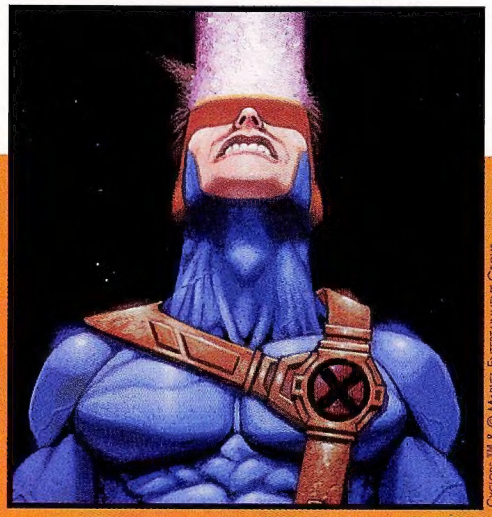

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THE EYES HAVE IT
The folks behind the Fleer Ultra X-Men cards spill the beans on page 50.

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Look!

Stupid, stupid Rat Creatures. Bone #13 1/2 offer. Page 64. Hey, we wanna get to know ya, and give you free stuff! Page 296.

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X-MEN ™ & © MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

"Alpha Flight?" Nope. "Starjammers?" Uh-uh. "The, uh... X-Men?" Bingo! Page 24.

"Check out the casting call for the X-Men flick, or I'll show you yer pancreas!" Do what he says. Check out page 42.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WCW INC.

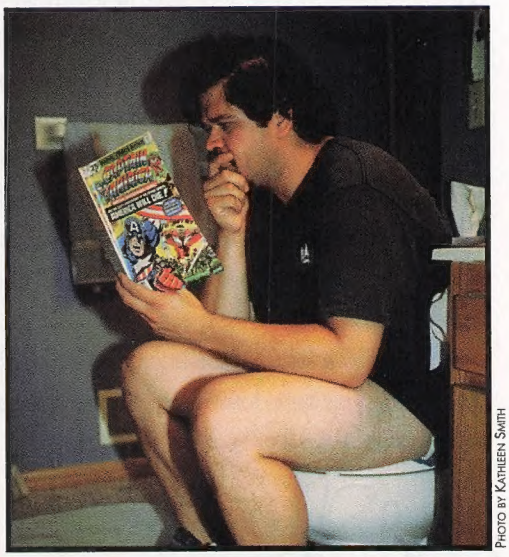

PHOTO BY KATHLEEN SMITH

The Comic Book Stress Test. Where action speaks louder than words. Page 57.

A LETTER FROM OUR PUBLISHER

Gareb and his magic friend.

Monster Mash

It's a monster.

No matter how you look at it, this issue of *Wizard*, a 300-page year-end, kick-butt issue, is a monster. We took 1993's year-end issue, #29, and dissected it, improving upon the good parts, and adding all kinds of new stuff, knowing that as good as last year's year-ender was, we had to do something new and fresh. What we ended up with is this 300-page behemoth that you now hold in your hands, which I think you'll agree, is nothing short of spectacular. We've pulled out all the stops and brought you all sorts of great stuff, like the big plans in store for Marvel's X-Men books, a talk with the insiders of the comic book industry on all the hot topics, the outrageous Comic Book Stress Test, and just loads more. When you're finished readin' this book, you'll be completely satisfied (and completely exhausted). And I'd also like to extend my thanks to Bill Jemas, Pat O'Grady, and Marlene Petter at Fleer for making this issue's awesome X-Men covers, straight from the Fleer X-Men card set, possible. Thanks, guys!

Well, after writing all about the year-end issue, it's finally beginning to sink in that 1994 is coming to a close. I can't believe it. With all the stuff we're doing here at *Wizard*, time just shoots on by, and before you know it, we'll be smack-dab in the middle of 1995. I can't help but reflect back on '94 and marvel at how the industry has changed so much, as well as wonder what '95 has in store for us in the biz. Judging by the strides comic-related material has made in the movies, TV, toy lines, video games, and other outside industry avenues, things do look promising. I, for one, can't wait to see how things'll shape up.

And that's about it. Before I split and let you run loose through the rest of the issue, I'd like to wish all of you a happy and healthy holiday season, and c'mon back next month as we kick off 1995, and *Wizard* begins to...evolve. (How's *that* for a teaser ending?)

'94

Gareb S. Shamus
The Big Cheese

THE GUIDE WIZARD® TO COMICS

Jumbo Egg Roll — Patrick McCallum
White Rice — Brian Cunningham
Szechuan Shredded Beef — Hank Bordowitz
Sweet & Pungent Combo — Patrick Daniel O'Neill, Marc Wilkofsky
Broccoli with Garlic Sauce — Andrew Kardon
Zon Bong Beef — Jon Warren
Fried Dumplings — Bob Marshall, David Prager, Michael Searle
Mandarin Triple Crown — William A. Christensen, Mike Fasolo, Mark Seifert

General Tso's Chicken — Matt Tierney
Sweet & Sour Chicken — Arlene So
Sha Cha Chicken — Robin James Ramos

Spicy Spare Ribs
Sean Aune, Steve Blackwell, Steve Brown, Rogers Cadenhead, Henry T. Colonna III, Jack Curtin, Paul J. Grant, Dave Galvan, Andrew Steven Harris, Clifford Lawrence, Gary St. Lawrence, Greg McElhattan, Todd McFarlane, Jim McLauchlin, Ruth Morrison, Tom Palmer Jr., John Seals, Bart Sears, Stephen Shamus, Marc Shapiro, Craig Shutt

Cyclops Cover Art — Mark "Pepper Steak" Sasso
Gambit Cover Art — Ray "Lo Mein" Lago
Chinese Take-Out of Choice — Hong Kong Kitchen, Congers

Imperial Chicken — Gareb S. Shamus
Pu Pu Platter — David E. Lindenbaum
Crab Stick — Doug Goldstein
House Special Egg Foo Young — Martha Scheidegger
Hot & Spicy Shredded Beef — Mercedes Cabo
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Magic Words

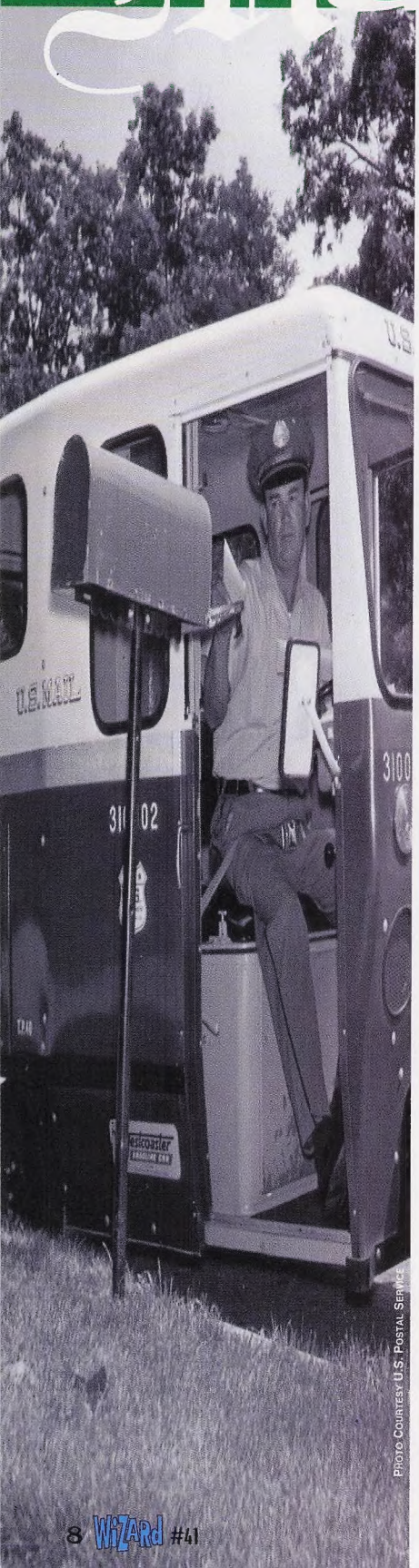

Photo Courtesy U.S. Postal Service

Casting the X-Flick

I'm not exactly sure where it all started, but suddenly there seems to be a lot of talk (or at least a lot of letters) about who the cast should be for a live-action X-Men movie. Right out of the blue, we suddenly started receiving lots of letters proposing possible casts. It's kind of a fun topic. Our good buddy Mark Klein of Central, SC proposed a fantasy cast of no less than 26 characters! Most of his casting decisions seemed pretty sound (King Kong Bundy as the Blob? I like it!), although I can't quite see his choice of Dustin Hoffman as Wolverine.

Tony Sehested and Matt Smith of Camarillo, CA collaborated on a list. His picks seemed a little weird. He wanted no less than two of the American Gladiators in the movie and...Danny DeVito as the Blob? I mean, he did a good job as the Penguin, but isn't that a bit of a stretch for the man who used to play Louie DePalma?

Anthony Ray of Minden, NE cast 16 different roles, and the only one that really stood out was Traci Lords as the White Queen. Methinks Anthony wants a version that's a little stronger than PG-13. The overwhelming favorite in all the letters? You guys would like to see Patrick Stewart (you know, that Jean-Luc Picard fella) as Professor X. Who would we like to see? Check out the *Wizard* staff picks on page 42.

Two issues ago, we got a letter from our new pal Suzanne S. Clark detailing what she thought were female/male inequities in the way comic characters were physically portrayed. We asked her to follow up and tell us what she wanted to see. This is what we got...

Dear Mr. McLauchlin,

Thanks for responding to my letter and for taking an interest in this subject.

Anyway, here's what I came up with. Women want better, not bigger. (Well, some things could be accentuated a little more!) We want better-looking guys. John Prophet, Rogue Prime, The Punisher, and Daniel from *Hellshock* are what we want more of regarding ideal physiques—guys who are tough, but not ugly. And we don't care if they're good or bad. But we definitely need smaller outfits! (Tighter and thinner would be nice, too.)

As far as women's roles go, Shi is an example to follow, because she's intelligent and kicks ass, and because when she's nude, it makes sense. She's meditating. Cool. That's very creative on the author's part and "literally responsible," too. But I really can't figure out why all the other comic book women are only wearing thong bathing suit/leotard-deals at most, and look like they're cruising for dates while they are, in fact, trying to fight the forces of evil. I can't figure that. I'd like to see a wider range of roles for females, maybe some tougher characters—soldiers, pilots, hired assassins, whatever—just not the same Barbie bimbos I see so much of now.

Oh, and one last comment: Hooray for Rob Liefeld for ripping John Prophet's outfit after he battled the Bloodstrike team in *Prophet* #2. If the heroes' costumes can't be made smaller for some reason, then maybe they could just get ripped to shreds occasionally! That'd be great.

Suzanne S. Clark
APO AE, Germany

Is that it? Is it as simple as that? There's no doubt that there's a certain (some would say large) segment of the male comic-buying population that buys books simply because they like seeing scantily clad women. Is the secret to pleasing female comic readers as easy as show-

ing scantily clad men? Can it really be that it's that simple? Maybe. After all, sex sells. That's a sure-fire marketing plan 100 percent of the time. Or is it? Witness our next letter...

Wizard,

I am writing to protest all scantily clad women in comic books, such as Shi, Vampirella, and Lady Death. I hate them all! As an average 13-year-old boy, I am determined not to take any part in the degradation of women in comic books. I mean, have you looked at the Invisible Woman's current costume? Come on! If we as comic book enthusiasts have to resort to nude pictures of cartoon characters to get off on, this hobby is getting sicker that I thought.

Graham Barey
Forest Grove, OR

I agree. There's a lot of stupid stuff in the comic world at any given time, but I'd personally be hard-pressed to come up with *anything* stupider than the current "Bad Girl craze."

BADROCK ™ & © ROB LIEFELD INC.

Dear Wizard,

I'm the biggest Youngblood fan, so of course I noticed a strange event. I'm talking about Badrock or Bedrock or whatever the rock dude's name is these days. He was called Bedrock in *Youngblood* issues #0-#5, but in issues #6 and #7, he's called Badrock. Could you please fix this mess?

Kevin Calongne
Arlington, TX

There's nothing to fix, Kevin; the former Bedrock is now Badrock. The change officially took place in *Youngblood Strikefile* #4, and the change was made so that people wouldn't confuse him with any Flintstones characters.

Dear Wizard,

Could you explain something for me? What are those symbols on Image comics like Extreme Studios, WildStorm Productions, etc.? Are they little divisions of Image comics or what?

Justin Marquis
Boston, MA

Kind of. Image is a loose confederation of a lot of little companies that all publish under the same header. All the comics are created separately and are owned by the individual copyright

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NEW! NEW! NEW! NEW! NEW! NEW!

Pen Pals

Want to get in touch with your fellow comic fans? Or want them to touch you? Send your name, address, age, gender, and three favorite titles to Pen Pals, c/o Wizard Press, at Magic Words's address on page 15. Hey, make a friend!

Eric Gorski
Age: 13 Sex: Male
2156 Christopher N.W.
Corvallis, OR 47330

Peter Khaud
Age: 12 Sex: Male
23423 Ladeene Ave.
Torrance, CA 90505
Likes: 2099 titles, *X-Men*

Matt Jent
Age: 14 Sex: Male
2726 Weaver Rd.
Batavia, OH 45103
Likes: *John Byrne's Next Men*, *Elfquest*, *Groo*

Philip Marachilian
Age: 14 Sex: Male
402 Stobe Ave.
Staten Island, NY 10306
Likes: *Silver Surfer*, Liefeld titles, *Cable*

holders—Rob Liefeld at Extreme or Jim Lee at WildStorm, for example. "Image" is the banner under which all of these creators get together to run the business end of the operation.

What's Up, Wizard,

I'm writing in regards to a letter written in *Wizard* #37, by a guy named Erwin Nuguid of Daly City, CA. I personally found this letter rather interesting. In his letter, he wrote about having two Spider-Man vs. Venom holograms from the Marvel Universe series 4 card set. He also said that one was colored green and the other yellow. He went on to ask if the yellow hologram was special. Your response was, "Sure."

My question is: How can you tell what color the hologram is? You see, I have a Spider-Man vs. Venom as well, and its color depends on how the light hits it. At different angles, it appears to be different colors—yellow, green, orange, even a deep aqua. In fact, all of my holograms react this way to light.

Robert Morales Muniz
Bronx, NY

That's just it. When you're talking about the hard-to-find Spidey/Venom hologram, yellow or green, they're all the same. But no matter how you perceive it, I think it's pretty darned special. And while we're speaking of states of perception, altered or otherwise...

SOLAR ™ & © WESTERN PUBLISHING. ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID PAGE

Dear Wizard,

I just bought those kinda dorky-looking glasses that Valiant puts out in conjunction with their Valiant Vision books. I looked at the poster that came in the package and I thought it was OK. Then, without thinking to take the glasses off, I took out another comic that I just bought—*WildC.A.T.s Trilogy* #1. When I opened the book, I was blown away. The Valiant Vision glasses also work on Image books! Then, just for the hell of it, I opened a copy of *Wizard*, and what do you know? The thing works on your mag, too. So who cares about Valiant Vision being canceled?

The glasses work with all comics that have a lot of red, yellow, orange, and purple in them. So dig out those old issues, and take a look at how cool-looking they have become.

Darin Mlady
Baton Rouge, LA

Hey, you know, he's right. The effect isn't quite as pronounced or focused on a "regular" book as it is on a Valiant Vision book, but it does work. Give it a try sometime. And if you don't have a pair of Valiant Vision glasses, you could try getting the same effect by spinning around in circles until you're silly, having a friend wearing a logging boot kick you in the head, or (if you're old enough) drinking some good ol' fashioned gin.

Dear Wizard Type Guys,

It happened again! Every time a hot book comes out, all the comic stores (or at least most of them) say they have sold out. Although I can't prove it, I think that they stash 'em in back until the value goes up. One shop I went to was selling *WetWorks* #2 with the variant cover for $5.50! That's fine, you might say. After all, it's their book. But it was the current issue for the month! I think that's really lame! If distributors want to fine someone so badly, why don't they fine unscrupulous dealers that practice this lame—but apparently profitable—way of doing business? If this is allowed to continue, there will no longer be a need for a cover price, and the little guy will have to pay whatever the dealers can milk him for! Thank you for listening to me whine.

Everett Collins
Augusta, GA

Don't you just hate those *petit bourgeois* price-gougers? A practice like that is rather bogus, but you always have an option—just buy the version that doesn't have the variant cover. After all, the rest of the comic is exactly the same. Ask yourself if you're buying the book *for* the book or for the cover. If you're buying it strictly for the cover, you're probably going to get exactly what you deserve. Not that the price-gougers of the world don't deserve a kick in the shins themselves.

Dear Wizard Staff,

I've been a comic book fanatic for about three years. When I say fanatic, I mean that I collect a little something from a lot of different companies. Some of the best books that I have ever read have been underground books like *Faust* and *Raw Media* from Rebel Studios, and *Cry for Dawn* and *Animal Mystic* from Cry for Dawn Productions. These companies had some very good ideas and some of the greatest art that I've ever seen. Tim Vigil (the artist on *Faust*) draws particularly dark, grim and evil—just like the storylines in *Faust*—and his covers are beautiful works of art.

Now, in this magazine that you call the "Guide to Comics," you hype up all the stuff that you guys like. Well, what about hyping some stuff from companies like London Night Studios and Xero Comics. I for one think that people would love a change from the current mainstream into something really different. People who like darker and grittier books should read about Faust or Razor—two of the darkest and grittiest characters out there.

Anyway, those are my feelings on the underground comic situation. They need some more attention, because they are fabulous. Thanks for your time.

Billy R. Taylor Jr.
Baltimore, MD

It's just one man's definition, but I wouldn't call these "undergrounds." They're more like "ground level." But those of you who like the "grim and gritty" side of comics might want to try some of the titles Billy mentioned here. Be advised—they're not for the faint of heart. Most of these guys make the Punisher look like a mama's boy.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MGM HOME VIDEO

Dear Wizard,

Can you please describe Shaft: his age, his origin, his personality, if girls like him, his mutant power, and so on.

Derek Young
Whitesboro, TX

Sure. Shaft's first appearance was in the classic early 1970s movie *Shaft*, which starred Richard Roundtree as private detective John Shaft. The movie had an excellent score done by Isaac Hayes, which included the classic "Theme from Shaft." Shaft was kidnapped by the Mafia and forced to rescue the daughter of a crimelord who had been kidnapped by a rival crime family.

John Shaft has many outstanding personality characteristics. According to Hayes's song, Shaft is both "the man who would risk his neck for his brother-man (Damn right!)," and "the cat who won't cop out when there's danger all about

YOU'VE JUST BEEN
DEALT A KILLER HAND.
X-MEN
MUTANT APOCALYPSE
SUPER NINTENDO
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(Right on!)." Girls do indeed like him, as Hayes describes him as "the private dick who's a sex machine to all the chicks."

Neil Tennant Photo courtesy of EMI Records

Dear Wizard,

Vicious rumor or shameless truth?

I read somewhere that Neil Tennant of the cheesy 1980s pop band Pet Shop Boys (you know, they sing "West End Girls") once worked for Marvel U.K. in some capacity. Now, in order to relieve the monotony of answering another "Letter to the Editor," I have provided the following noncommittal method for answering tedious inquiries:

Please check as is appropriate...

❑ The above statement is true

❑ The above statement is false

❑ I neither know, nor do I care

Trina Julian
Indianapolis, IN

Geez, I guess that would have to be, "I neither know, nor do I care." But where I came from, all the West End girls wanted to date the East End boys.

Dear Wizard,

I recently purchased *Ken Griffey Jr. Presents Major League Baseball* for Super Nintendo. While I was checking out the various teams, I noticed that the Houston Astros roster included H. Chaykin, J. Romita, J. Shooter, S. Ditko, J. Kirby, D. Martin, F. Miller, and S. Lee. Do these people know they've now become baseball stars as well as comic book legends?

I also discovered that C. Kent, B. Wayne, D. Grayson, B. Banner, G. Gardner, M. Murdock, B. Grimm, and N. Fury all pitch for the Brewers.

Jason Kumpfmiller
Glenshaw, PA

Actually, that game comes pre-loaded with all sorts of wacky players populating the various teams. You can change the names if you want, or play a comic book World Series.

Dear Wizard,

For those of you who are fans of Mike Allred, the following should prove very interesting. The alien that is chasing Madman in *Madman Comics* #1 is not speaking nonsense. You can decipher what the alien is saying by substituting the opposite letter of the alphabet for each one in his word balloon. For example, if the letter in the comic is "Z," then you substitute "A," or if the letter is "G," you substitute "T." What the alien is saying is really quite funny, and also reveals parts of the plot. Everyone deserves to know of this original script idea, and congratulations should be extended to Mike Allred for bringing the fun back to comics.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
Z Y X W V U T S R Q P O N M L K J I H G F E D C B A

Shawn Watkinson
Havelock, Ontario, Canada

Gszmph uli gsv rmul, Hszdm.

Dear Wizard,

Why did Wolverine change from a brown-and-yellow costume to a blue-and-yellow costume?

Joshua Church
Muskegon, MI

Actually, he started with a blue-and-yellow union suit and switched to the brown costume in *Uncanny X-Men* #139. While it was never explained why he changed, I always assumed he was in mourning over the death of Jean Grey (who, of course, years later was revealed to be not dead at all but just really, really sleepy). He went back to yellow-and-blue in the adjectiveless *Spider-Man* #10 after his brown costume got shredded, and bounced back and forth between the two costumes before finally settling on the original yellow-and-blue.

Dear Wizard,

Marvel's Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle knock-off that never made it out was going to be called *Adult Thermonuclear Samurai Elephants*.

Joe Cooke
Roopville, GA

And those 25 *Wizard* style points go out to Joe in Roopville.

Dear Wizard,

I think I have a few reasons why creator-owned comics are not as good, storywise, as publisher-owned creations:

1) The lack of an editor as boss stops a creator from learning what the public likes about a comic. The editor can tell the writer/artist what guidelines to stay within, so that the public is satisfied. The comic will become and stay popular this way.

2) A character in a comic should have clear limitations of what he/she/it can do. In most Marvel or DC comics, the established characters have strength, speed, and agility limits. Hence, the characters are more believable. In many Image comics, characters have weapons to suit any occasion and can jump twice as high for this circumstance than for their last all-out effort, and change in size in relation to other people.

3) This does not apply to everyone in the field, but I do believe that separate writers and artists do a better job than someone tackling both aspects. I draw also, and I know that if I think of an idea, it is more visual than verbal. For instance, if I want to draw an alleyway, I will picture it in my head in terms of perspective and proportion. Maybe throw in a few bricks, a few garbage cans, etc. A writer might give me a different, maybe better, "feel" of the alleyway in the way he describes it. This way, two people actually work on the art. Too many creator-owned comics feature too many splash pages, too few panels, and a general concentration on art, instead of dialogue, to carry the story.

Gregg Reeves
San Antonio, TX

Now that's interesting. The conventional wisdom has always been that creator-owned comics are better because the creator gets free reign over what he or she puts on the page without any outside restrictions. But your arguments are rather interesting. Any comments out there? How about from some professional comic writers or artists?

Wizard,

1) Will there ever be an Ambush Bug-Wolverine crossover?

2) What is the meaning of life?

3) Does somebody besides myself think that gun-toting, vigilante antiheroes suck?

4) Who has snappier banter? Speedball, Spider-Man, Superboy, or Grifter?

5) Is that Zealot's underwear that Grifter uses as a mask?

6) Why is Skin so creepy?

7) Why is college so hard and yet you have to pay for it?

Joey Hatfield Age: 13 Sex: Male 1326 Wallace Rd. Apt. #40 Salem, OR 97304 Likes: All X-titles, *Spider-Man, Legionnaires*	Jason Blanks Age: 16 Sex: Male 2078 N. Sherman Ave. Panama City, FL 32405 Likes: X-titles, *Spawn, Sandman*	Jeff Cody Age: 16 Sex: Male P.O. Box 491 Fossil, OR 97830 Likes: *X-Men, Morbius, Spirits of Vengeance*	Tom Gress Age: 20 Sex: Male 21389 Tulane Apt. 201 Farmington Hills, MI 48336 Likes: *Pitt, Spawn, Cyberforce*	Hendrik Poppe Age: 21 Sex: Male Hasseler Strasse 30 29308 Winsen/Aller Germany Likes: X-titles, *Spawn, John Byrne's Next Men*	Randy Michaud Age: 25 Sex: Male 118 McKinley Ave. Westbrook, ME 04092 Likes: *Spawn, Punisher, Uncanny X-Men*	Curie Choi Age: 12 Sex: Female 11 Trotter's Bridge Dr. Poquoson, VA 23662 Likes: All X-titles, *Wolverine, Punisher*	Egrah Mustafa Age: 15 Sex: Female 1251 E. 59th St. Brooklyn, NY 11234 Likes: *X-Men, Spawn, WildC.A.T.s*

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Ask the WIZARD

Q: What is the red dot in the middle of Mr. Sinister's head for?

—D. Green, Bernice, LA

A: *When you press it, he says one of four different sayings.*

Q: If I spread all my *Wizard* covers all over the floor, will the covers make one big "Image"?

—J. Ebb, Albuquerque, NM

A: *Hey, watch it, pal. We do X-Men covers, too.*

Q: What the hell is wrong with that Shamus guy?

—D. Trosper, Gnome, AK

A: *Crabs.*

Q: Has Gambit ever eaten one of Hardee's™ Cajun burgers?

—A. Hewitt, Nevada, MO

A: *He's got twenty pounds of undigested red meat in his colon, if that's any indication.*

Q: Why does Sonny give those kids free Cocoa Puffs™?

—R. Lomax, Evington, VA

A: *It's only free the first time. Every time after that, you gotta pay for it.*

Q: What kind of car was the General Lee from *The Dukes of Hazzard*?

—B. Jones, Dublin, OH

A: *What the hell's with all the stupid questions? Nobody asks normal stuff anymore, like if Wolverine can cut though Cap's shield and crap like that. Anyway, to answer your question, the General Lee was a Dodge Charger. Its doors were welded shut so you could only get in through the side windows, and its car horn played "Dixie." Sweet machine.*

Ask the Pros

Hey, Marc Silvestri...

"Will there ever be a Cyberforce/X-Men crossover?"

—T. Nuttman, Topeka, KS

PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

Have a question that's bugging the heck out of you and that no one can answer? Heck, the Wizard can answer anything. Just send your stumpers to Ask the Wizard, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064.

ACE THE BAT-HOUND ™ & © DC COMICS

8) Why does Oedipus from *The Tick* look like Elektra from *Daredevil*?

9) What happened to Ace the Bat-Hound?

10) What came before Team 7?

11) Why is Thor so friggin' lame?

Michael Atwood
N. Fort Myers, FL

1) Probably not, but I'd love to see one.

2) To live in harmony with your brother-man, eat as much broccoli as you can, get all the Neil Young recordings on CD (except *American Stars and Bars*, which is still available on album only), get as many comic books as you can for free, root-root-root for ol' Notre Dame, and leave the world a better place than it was when you entered it.

3) Yeah. I do.

4) Your friendly neighborhood Spider-Man.

5) Hey, now—let's keep it clean here.

6) I think you've been touching the wrong people.

7) Because anything worth attaining is hard...and usually expensive.

8) Because they're both Greek.

9) Geez, I really don't know. But why did he have to wear a mask? Was it so that other dogs wouldn't recognize him? Did he have a little doggie secret identity to protect? And if he did, would a mask really help? I mean, dogs don't know each other by sight—they know each other by how their butts smell.

10) Team 6, I would assume.

11) Ever since the Rascally One, writer Roy Thomas, came back (as of issue #475), it's been pretty swell.

Dear Wizard crew,

I have read and collected comics for over 20 years. Without trying to sound too egotistical, I do consider myself to be an expert in the field. Still, there is one question that has kept me perplexed for a number of years. What the hell ever happened to Zan and Jayna, the Wonder Twins?

I would love to see them make a big comeback. Maybe they could become members of the Justice League or Titans. Wouldn't it be great to see bad guys cringe at this snappy dialogue:

WONDER TWINS ™ & © DC COMICS

"Wonder Twin powers—activate!"

"Shape of—a gorilla!"

"Form of—a bucket of water!"

I can't count the number of times I've seen a hero in a perilous situation that could have been resolved by the presence of a large gorilla with a bucket of water! I think it's time for DC to listen to the urgent requests of their readers and bring back the Wonder Twins. Thank you for listening...I gotta go now. It's time for my medication.

Travis Nichols
President, O.W.L.
(Organization of Wonder Twin Lovers)
Louisville, KY

The Wonder Twins were a couple of superhero tag-alongs on the 1970s cartoon *Super Friends*, which was loosely based on DC's Justice League. They also appeared in the *Super Friends* comic book series, starting with #7. They were likable sorts, but their powers were extremely lame. To use their powers, they'd have to touch hands and yell, "Wonder Twin powers—activate!" Jayna could then turn into an animal, while Zan could turn into any form of water. (For easy transportation, he would usually turn himself into plain old water or ice, and have the Twins' monkey, Gleek carry him in a bucket.) I saw Zan do an ice ladder once. No kidding.

Dear All-Powerful Wizemen of Wizard,

I was hoping that you could answer my most mind-bending questions.

1) Would Wolverine kiss Spawn on the cheek for a Klondike Bar™?

2) How many licks would it take Venom, with his huge tongue, to get to the Tootsie Roll center of a Tootsie Pop™?

Andrew Gray
Pueblo, CO

I will answer your most mind-bending questions.

1) Heck, yeah, and twice on a Sunday!

2) Three! Hot dammit, it's three! How many times do I have to tell you people?

Dear Wizard,

Whose face do you think is more

hideously scarred, mutilated, destroyed, and ugly—Spawn's or Deadpool's?

Scott Wilson
Bandon, OR

Michael Jackson's.

Yo, Wizard,

What are Rogue's measurements?

Dan Nichols
Converse, TX

Glad you asked. Her television measures 27 inches on the diagonal. Her car cranks out 120 horsepower. Her blender has five speeds. Her batting average in the Greater Westchester Mutant Softball League is a respectable .404. She wears a size seven shoe. Her soap is 99.44% pure, her last mini-golf score was a three over par 57, and she's got about 53,000 drooling fanboys asking weird questions about her.

Dear Wise Ones in Wizard,

I have a few questions concerning Namor, the Sub-Mariner:

1) What are those weird little wings on his ankles for? They obviously aren't big enough to enable him to fly. Right?

2) Where did he get his funky looks from?

3) What can he possibly see in the Invisible Woman?

Johan Choi
Fullerton, CA

I have a few answers concerning Namor, the Sub-Mariner:

1) Wrong! Those little wings *do* enable him to fly.

2) He's half-human, half-Atlantean.

3) This is the world's greatest straight line. It is so perfect, I'll let all of you make your own jokes.

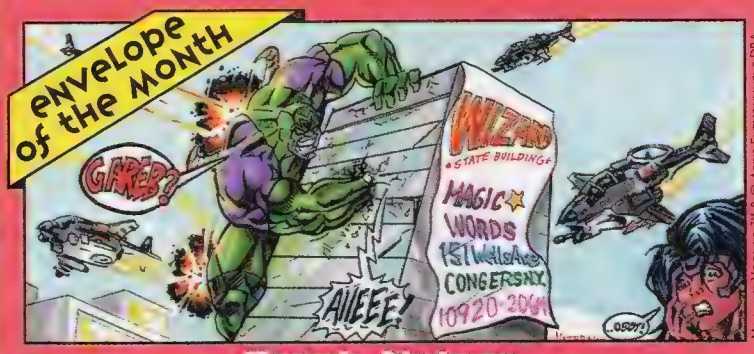
That's it. I find myself out of space. You know it's been a kick, but I've got bills to pay. See ya next month. Until that time, I remain...

Jim McLauchlin, editor of that fine magazine Collector's Sportslook, *waits not all too patiently for the republic of the working class and economic liberty.*

Send your letters to:
Magic Words
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920-2064

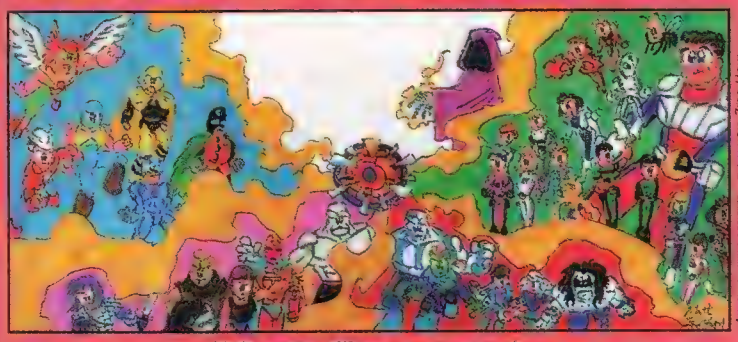
Enveloping LETTER ART!

When you drop us a line, show us your drawin' skill! If it's good, we'll print it here, and *boom*, you'll be famous! Just think, as soon as your envelope gets printed, you'll become a household name and you'll start dating the likes of pre-Hostess™-binge Anna-Nicole Smith or a 90-year-old millionaire (or both, if you like). Fans who get their letter art printed will each receive a copy of *Marvels* #0 signed by Alex Ross, a copy of *The Ray* (ongoing series, collector's edition) #1 signed by Joe Quesada, the issue of *Wizard* in which their envelope appeared signed by the *Wizard* creative staff, and a nifty *Wizard* baseball cap! The creator of the best envelope wins all that neat stuff *plus* a *Gen*[13] #1 signed by Brandon Choi, and a *Kindred* #1 signed by Brett Booth. Please include a clearly printed return address on the back of your envelope.



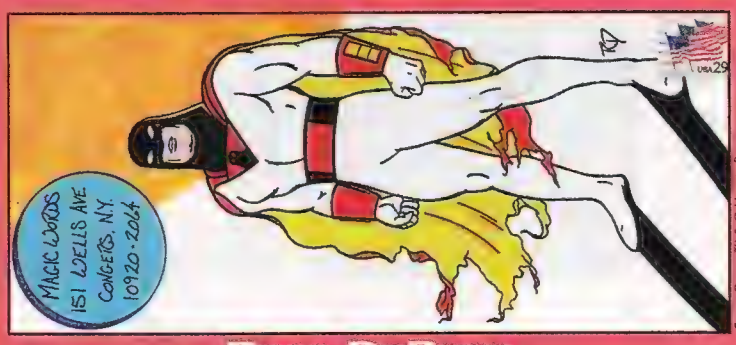
Mad and Voodoo ™ & © Aegis Entertainment DBA Wildstorm Productions

Frank Natera
Miami, FL



All characters depicted—the Whole Zero Hour bunch!—™ & © DC Comics.

Matt Brossard
Sidney, B.C., Canada



Space Ghost ™ & © Hanna-Barbera

Russ DeRoos
Gainesville, FL

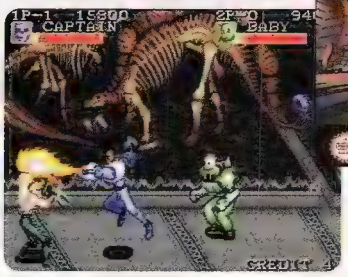
In the year 2026, things get thug-ly when bionic gang Scumocide tries to take over the entire universe. Captain Commando and his posse–Baby Head, Ginzu the Ninja and Mack the Knife–are up for the fight with a futuristic arsenal including the energy glove, knee rocket and subsonic knives. And huge moves like the Captain Kick, Flying Katana and Rolling Punch. In this straight

COMMIT SCUMOCIDE.

from the arcade hit, one or two players must commit Scumocide. Or face the end of all existence.

Baby Head better give his knee rocket launcher a quick charge before battling Yamato.

Captain Commando puts out the lights of the Electric Lady with his arm cannon.



Mack the Knife and Ginzu the Ninja use their "bandage whip, slice and dice combo" on some Scum.

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WIZARD NEWS

SWEEPING CHANGES AT MARVEL

Compiled by Patrick Daniel O'Neill

You Say You Want a Marvelution?

"Marvelution: The Art of Change," **Marvel Comics's** publishing plan for 1995, signals major changes for the "House of Ideas." Among other goodies, Marvel's editorial department and lineup will be split into "four distinct character-driven comic groups."

Each of the four divisions will operate just like a small company and have its own "editor-in-chief," leaving current editor-in-chief (and senior vice president of Marvel Publishing) **Tom DeFalco** to do... what?

Reports are that DeFalco may choose to solely freelance for Marvel, but Marvel president **Terry Stewart** confirmed that DeFalco has been offered a promotion to oversee Marvel's global operations, develop media projects, and act as liaison between Marvel Comics and other Marvel divisions. "As of the last day I was in the office [Tuesday, October 18]," said Marvel writer/editorial advocate **Fabian Nicieza**, "Tom had not officially decided whether he was going to take the job." DeFalco could not be reached for comment.

"Over the last three months, I've heard a lot of suggestions from industry professionals and fans, inside and outside of Marvel," Stewart said, explaining the plan. "We're putting the best of these ideas into effect through Marvelution. And we're still not done yet. This is a work in progress."

Marvelution, according to Stewart, is a response to changes that have happened to the industry in the past few years. "We had to evolve the way we created and marketed our comics

MARVELUTION CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

Tom DeFalco (top) has been offered a promotion, while Stan Lee intends on launching Excelsior comics.

Stein Resigns as Marvel President

According to an article in *The Wall Street Journal*, later confirmed by Marvel, **Marvel Entertainment Group** president and chief operating officer **Bruce Stein** resigned on October 18, less than four months after being named to the posts.

The *Journal* reported that Stein stepped down as a result of "philosophical differences" with company executives, as well as disagreements over hiring policies at the comic book, licensing, and toy company. Insiders say Stein was eager to bring his own management team to Marvel, including some of his former colleagues from Hasbro Inc., but was thwarted by executives of Toy Biz, which is 46%-owned by Marvel and would have been affected by his proposed management changes.

Operations that reported through Stein will now report directly to Marvel's chief executive officer, **William C. Bevins, Jr.**

-Patrick Daniel O'Neill

Marvel Acquires Welsh

Marvel Entertainment Group Inc., the parent of Marvel Comics, has agreed in principle to acquire **Welsh Publishing Group**, a children's publisher specializing in magazines based on popular licensed properties. Welsh founder and president **Donald E. Welsh** is joining Marvel.

Founded in 1982, Welsh Publishing has a roster of titles including ***Superman & Batman Magazine, Milestone for Kids, Barbie, Mickey Mouse, Barney, Major League Baseball for Kids***, and ***Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers***, with a subscriber base of more than two million.

"The Welsh titles are a perfect complement to our own equities, enabling us to reach a broader demographic as well as create very specific networks to meet the marketing needs of advertisers and promotional partners," stated **Jerry Calabrese**, president of Marvel Consumer Marketing. "Of no less importance is the addition to Marvel of Don himself, a skilled publisher whose knowledge of kids' magazines and marketing is

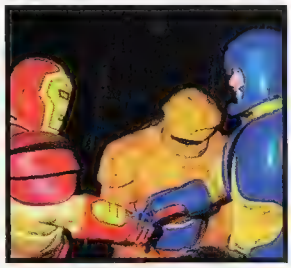
WELSH CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

TM & © MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

"Owww! OK, OK, your movie was great, your movie was great, rubber ears and all!" pleaded dented-fan of living-legend.

"The X-rays were conclusive, Mr. McFarlane. We've discovered what that pain in your butt is."

ALL CHARACTERS SHOWN TM & © THEIR RESPECTIVE OWNERS



"...five potato, six potato, seven potato, more. OK, Thing, you lose. Take off your shorts, big boy."

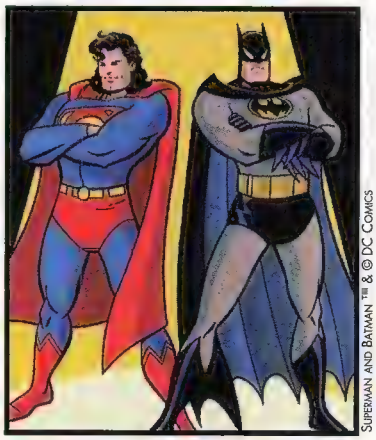
WELSH CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

second to none." Added Calabrese, "This acquisition—like Marvel's other recent acquisitions of Fleer trading cards, Toy Biz toys, and Panini stickers—is one more step toward making Marvel a comprehensive global youth marketing company."

The acquisition could have ramifications beyond Marvel and Welsh. Welsh has licensing agreements with competitors DC Comics for ***Superman & Batman Magazine***, and with Milestone Media for ***Milestone for Kids***. Both of those publishers are major competitors with Marvel in the comic book marketplace. It was rumored that DC had already pulled the issue of *Superman & Batman* in production at Welsh, intending to complete and publish the title in-house, but the report could not be confirmed at press time. DC would not comment on the status of its license agreements with Welsh at this time, but Milestone president **Derek Dingle** said the one-shot *Milestone for Kids* would be published by Welsh as planned, and that any future projects would have to be negotiated in light of the acquisition.

Also affected could be Matt Groening's **Bongo Comics**, publishers of *Simpsons Comics* and other titles featuring the popular Fox Network characters. According to Bongo managing editor Jason Grode, the company had a financing and distribution deal with Welsh that expired upon publication of Bongo's eighteenth issue, *Radioactive Man #6*. "Since Welsh never had any ownership in Bongo, neither will Marvel," Grode said. "Bongo is 100 percent completely owned by Matt Groening, as it has always been. We are in negotiation with Marvel to see if they want to have the same relationship with Bongo that Welsh had. No matter what happens, everything will continue here under Matt's creative direction."

—Patrick Daniel O'Neill



SUPERMAN AND BATMAN ™ & © DC COMICS

Marvel wants to acquire Welsh Publishing, which publishes Superman & Batman Magazine. *Wonder what DC thinks?*

MARVEL Produces Personalized Comic

Need a late Christmas gift? Forget somebody? **Marvel Comics** has the answer: a personalized issue of ***X-Men***.

The book will cast your gift recipient (or yourself, as the case may be) as **Captain Universe**, in an adventure with the mutant team. It includes details such as the reader's name, hometown, and the name of a friend or relative. The package also includes a personalized X-Men poster and trading card, with art by the **Brothers Hildebrandt**, who painted the issue's cover as well. The comic's interior art is by Jim Craig and Dan McConnell.

As long-time Marvel readers know, Captain Universe manifests in times of crisis, as the floating globule known as the Uni-Power bestows a costume, power, and knowledge on an ordinary mortal.

The order form for the personalized comic is in November cover-dated issues of all Marvel titles, and at your local comics shop. If you don't have time for that, call 1-800-830-6079. The price is $14.95, plus $2.95 for shipping and handling. It's too late to get the book delivered in time for Christmas, but the offer has been extended to December 31, 1994—so if there's a comics fan on your list who you forgot about, you can always send a belated gift.

—Patrick Daniel O'Neill

MARVELUTION CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

and managed our business."

Though Marvel insiders worry privately that Marvelution will divide the Big M into rival kingdoms, Stewart believes the divisions will "work together, adapt to the market, create better product, and increase sales." Ultimately, he said, "It will encourage editorial, marketing, and sales creativity."

"Marvelution will feature the 'launch' of the new groups during 1995," declared Stewart. This may include distinctive re-packaging of all books within the new lineup, along with "a new storyline that will clearly position the group or theme, each title character within the group or theme, and the relationship between each title character within the group or theme."

"Even though groups will operate independently," noted Stewart, "there will still be crossovers and guest appearances, but the emphasis will be on making them really significant events."

The divisions break down as follows:

☞ **X-Men**, involving all the X-titles, including *Cable, Excalibur, Generation X, Uncanny X-Men, Wolverine, X-Factor, X-Force, X-Men*, and others. **Bob Harras**, presently group editor of the X-Men titles, will be editorial director.

☞ **Spider-Man**, featuring all the Spider-titles (*Amazing Spider-Man, Spectacular Spider-Man, Web of Spider-Man, Spider-Man*), as well as spin-off titles such as *Venom*, and other books that naturally relate to Spider-Man or readers of the character's various titles. **Bob Budiansky** is editorial director of the Spider-Man comics group, with **Danny Fingeroth** continuing as group editor of titles that actually star the wall-crawler himself.

☞ **Mark Gruenwald**, **Bobbie Chase**, and **Carl Potts**, all newly named editorial directors, will head up the Marvel Universe (Marvel Heroes, Cosmic Powers, "Edge," and 2099) and General Entertainment (Media, Action-Adventure, All Ages, and Humor) divisions.

New to the Marvelution is a **Stan Lee**-created imprint, **Excelsior Comics**. Based on the West Coast, "Excelsior will feature a small, tightly woven universe of characters," said Stewart, "to allow for complete fan involvement with each title." Excelsior marks Lee's return to comics since he helped launch *Ravage 2099* in 1992.

"Specific editorial and title announcements," Marvel promises, "will be the subject of future announcements."

"We'll be making a steady stream of announcements, filling in the details as they develop," Stewart acknowledged, "and we'll be communicating them to the industry and our fans through publications, mailings, conferences, and meetings with distributors and retailers."

"Ultimately," Stewart continued, "Marvelution is designed to make us more responsive to our retailers and, more importantly, our fans."

Curiously, there were no comments revolving around the rumor of Marvel's supposed acquisition of **Malibu Comics**. While Malibu has denied the rumor's truth, Marvel would simply not comment on the matter. (No further information was available at deadline).

—Ruth Morrison

ELLISON Returns to Comics

Dark Horse Comics has pulled back the curtain on a project that the rumor mill's been buzzing about: ***Harlan Ellison's Dream Corridor***.

"Five years ago, Showtime asked me to put together a cable anthology series that I'd host, ala Rod Serling," said Ellison. "I said, 'That's not my style.' So they said, 'Put together something interesting and we'll look at it.'" Ellison dropped two ideas: One was adaptations from his renowned anthology series, *Dangerous Visions*; the other was adaptations of his own stories. The TV dudes went for the latter.

"I put together a framing mechanism that I thought would be a nice way to do it," Ellison explained. "Unfortunately, they didn't understand it, because as we all know, explaining an abstract idea to television executives is like reading Voltaire to a cage of baboons."

Expecting to eventually do something for cable, Ellison realized he'd need storyboards. "I had this epiphany and said, 'Wait a minute—why not do storyboards and make some money off it?' So, I altered the idea and approached several houses and they loved it. But you could grow a beard long and gray before they moved off their bottoms."

Enter Dark Horse editor **Bob Schreck**. "He'd heard about my project through the grapevine and said he wanted it," Ellison noted. Ellison's one caveat was that there would be no announcement of the project until four issues were already in the can. "The writers and artists were sworn to absolute secrecy," he said.

Harlan Ellison's Dream Corridor is a 48-page, square-bound deluxe volume featuring art by **Pat Broderick**, **Doug Wildey**, **Michael T. Gilbert**, **Matt Howarth**, **Gary Gianni**, and **Jill Bauman**. There's five stories in all, with interstitial framing sequences by Ellison, rendered by **Eric Shanower**. This special volume sets up the series, which is slated for an April release. Every issue will have an original short story by Ellison.

Said Schreck, "Harlan has kept a good profile in the comics industry. Does the average 14-year-old know who he is? If he doesn't, he will."

—Clifford Lawrence Meth

COLLEEN DORAN Gives the Legal Lowdown

Industry veteran **Colleen Doran** has written a layman's guide to the legal minefield of comic book publishing law, giving newcomers the lowdown on a wide range of key topics, including self-publishing, work-for-hire, contracts, and intellectual property rights. Doran is the creator of ***A Distant Soil***, published by her own Aria Press, and has also contributed to titles from other publishers, most recently DC Comics's *Valor*.

Titled *101 Things Your Publisher Doesn't Want You To Know: The Comic Book Creator's Guide to Art and Entertainment Law*, Doran intends the work to be a handbook for anyone intending to enter the complicated, and often adversarial, field of comic book creating and publishing.

"I don't mean that the publisher is your enemy, but I do mean that the publisher is not necessarily your friend, either," Doran said. "They're not necessarily going to tell you everything that is in your interest."

According to Doran, the book lays out, in layman's terms, the basic elements of subjects like copyright law, trademark law, and the most common types of comic book publishing contracts. It also gives a step-by-step approach to enforcing your contract when your publisher isn't interested in doing it on his or her own.

Said Doran, "Your thoughts are not tangible like a car. If someone were to steal your car, you could call the police; but if someone were to infringe your contract rights, the police aren't going to help you. You'd have to get a lawyer. The contract doesn't protect you against violations—once there's a violation, it's incumbent upon you to protect yourself."

The book, tentatively priced at $4.95, will hit the stores in early 1995.

—Andrew Steven Harris

And the VISITOR Is...?

Valiant will be launching a book starring a new character, the **Visitor**. Only it's not *really* a new character, according to series writer **Kevin VanHook**. "The Visitor's definitely someone you've seen before," he hinted, "and not in a little cameo shot."

So who is the Visitor? It's a secret—even from the readers! "Introduced" in *The Chaos Effect—Alpha*, the Visitor takes on all comers in November's two-shot ***The Visitor Vs. the Valiant Universe***, and never lets slip who he is. "Only about six people know," admitted regular penciller **Bernard Chang**, "and we're not talking."

Wanna know who the Visitor is? Hint: it ain't Steve Massarsky.

What *do* we know? The Visitor wears a mask to hide his identity and to promote his reputation. "It's an intimidating costume designed to strike fear into the hearts of his enemies," said VanHook. The Visitor also wears a cape, "but it serves a purpose," Chang explained. "He uses it as a weapon."

Will we ever know who the Visitor is? "There's a slim chance we'll never tell," admitted VanHook, though Valiant marketing VP **Marty Stever** hinted that the Visitor's identity will be known by summer 1995. "When we do tell everybody," VanHook promised, "it'll be a double hit. You'll say, 'That's cool,' and 'That's a really cool way to do it.'"

Some thoughts (and clues) on who the Visitor is:

- **Spider Alien**: "Any Spider Alien I've ever seen doesn't look anything like this," VanHook remarked, "and this seems to be of a higher intelligence and technology than any Spider Alien I've seen."
- **Another alien**: "The Visitor is perceived as an alien being," conceded Chang.
- **Harada's clone**: "I don't believe so," VanHook replied.
- **Multiple entities**: "No," he continued. "It's one creature."
- **Mothergod (AKA Erica Pierce)**: "It's not her," VanHook assured. "She's still trapped in a cincture wormhole."
- **Walt Willey**: "No," laughed Chang, "although Walt may be appearing in upcoming *Dr. Mirage* issues."
- **Female**: "If it has human physiology," pronounced VanHook, "it's definitely a male." Chang disagreed: "At my school [Pratt Institute], I've seen girls that look like the Visitor."
- **Final clue**: "The Visitor likes cheese," said Chang. Hmmm...could it be *Wizard*'s own Big Cheese, Gareb Shamus? "No," Chang confessed, "although I did use Gareb's body as the model for the Visitor's physique."

—Ruth Morrison

LEE and SMITH Swap Art

WildStorm Productions's *WildC.A.T.s Adventures Sourcebook*, based upon the Saturday morning cartoon series, will sport a cover by *Bone*'s **Jeff Smith**. In exchange, WildStorm founder **Jim Lee** will do a pin up for an undetermined issue of *Bone*, featuring Fone Bone as a member of the WildC.A.T.s.

Smith recalls the origin of the project. "We were both doing a comic book convention and we discovered that there was a big crossover among the fans for both *WildC.A.T.s* and *Bone*. That's what planted the seed. Then one day, Jim gave me a call."

"Jeff has impressed me both as an artist and as a small press publisher. I have loads of admiration for what he stands for, as well as for the work he produces," said Lee. "He is certainly one of the best of the new generation of comic artists that has come up over the past few years, and it's great to be able to work with him this way."

WildC.A.T.s Adventures Sourcebook will be on sale in January.

—Marc Shapiro

WildC.A.T.s. ™ & © Aegis Entertainment DBA WildStorm Productions

Bone *creator Jeff Smith's rendition of Jim Lee's WildC.A.T.s.*

COMPANY UPDATES

CARTOON BOOKS
February's *Bone* #18 has Phoney Bone and Smiley Bone go head-to-head with Lucius, to see who can win the loyalty of the tavern customers.

DARK HORSE COMICS
Coming in January is *The Rocketeer Adventure Magazine* #3, which has been in the making by creator/writer/artist Dave Stevens since 1988. This is a stand-alone story which resolves Cliff's New York adventure...John Byrne will make an early return from his hiatus to do a two-issue sequel to *Babe*, titled *Babe 2*, shipping in early March. The story has our heroine battling a legion of giant cyborg alligators in the streets of N.Y.C., led by The Shrewmanoid, Monkeyman and O'Brien's nemesis...The one-shot *Happy Birthday, Martha Washington* ships in March, in time for Martha's actual birthday (March 11). This ish includes two reprinted stories by Frank Miller and Dave Gibbons (one from *Dark Horse's Fifth Anniversary* paperback, and another from 1993's *San Diego Comic Con Comic* #2) and an all-new story by the duo.

DC COMICS
Flash #100, the climax of the six-part "Terminal Velocity" storyline, ships in February...Flash's protégé, Impulse, gains his own ongoing series that same month. *Flash* scribe Mark Waid is writing it, with art supplied by Humberto Ramos and Wayne Faucher.

MALIBU COMICS
Incredible Hulk's Gary Frank will pencil the first issue of January's *Godwheel* mini-series.

MARVEL COMICS
Bravura founder Howard Chaykin has been tapped to write an ongoing *Nick Fury* series for sometime in '95. Chaykin's last involvement with the character was as the artist to Archie Goodwin's story, *Wolverine/Nick Fury: The Scorpio Connection* graphic novel.

MAXIMUM PRESS
Dan Fraga's *Black Flag* series will join the Maximum Press lineup in January. Originally a black-and-white one-shot, this series will be in full color, and the cover is expected to be a triple-gatefold.

NOW COMICS
Married...With Children: We're Dysfunctional #1 ships in January. This three-issue mini-series has the Bundy family appearing on a bad daytime TV talk show.

TOPPS COMICS
In January, *The Lone Ranger and Tonto* mini-series is collected into a trade paperback, with an all-new wraparound cover by Tim Truman.

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CROATIANS' GRENDEL
Comic a Real-Life Fairy Tale

The two-part **Dark Horse** comic published in October and November, ***Grendel Tales: Devils & Deaths***, introduces the American comics market to two new creators. The story behind their tale, however, rivals the comic's plot itself.

Writer **Darko Macan**, 28, and artist **Edvin Biukovic**, 25, reside in Zagreb, Croatia, close to the ongoing Bosnia-Herzegovina war. But while their comic's story examines two warring Grendel clans, Macan said there are only general parallels to what he sees happening in real life. "The story is mostly fantasy," he told *Wizard*. "War is war, but there are no real connections. I didn't want to make a direct association."

The two creators have worked together on a variety of local projects since 1987, producing everything from short horror stories to adaptations of young adult novels. Macan read in a letters column that *Grendel Tales* was looking for new talents and new perspectives on Matt Wagner's characters. "So I decided, why not?"

The war hasn't interfered with communication between the creators and Dark Horse, said editor **Diana Schutz**, but it did have one impact. Before contracts were completed, submissions editor **Jamie S. Rich** received an emergency call from Macan. "He told me that they needed to get their contracts right away, because Edvin had just gotten his draft notice," Rich recalled. The Dark Horse contracts would convince authorities that Biukovic had steady work, giving him a deferment.

"I freaked out," Rich said. "We got the contracts out immediately." Added Schutz, "We definitely wanted Edvin drawing comics, not killing or being killed." Macan, however, downplayed the drama. "The contracts were a safety catch for getting out of the draft," he explained. "There are many ways to avoid being drafted here. It's just that this one was legal."

Biukovic won't have to worry about the draft for quite a while. The two already have a follow-up four-parter scheduled for March through June. Called ***Grendel Tales: Devil's Choices***, it chronicles the adventures of a character from the first story, 10 years in the future. Macan also has a funny-animal character, Sergei, on tap from Mu Publishing for next summer.

"It's really kind of a fairy story," said Schutz of the duo's recent success. Rich added, "It was a roll of the dice for them. They didn't know if their proposal would even get to our office, let alone be published." Now that it is seeing publication, it looks like American comic book readers will be seeing more of Dark Horse's Croatian connection.

—Craig Shutt

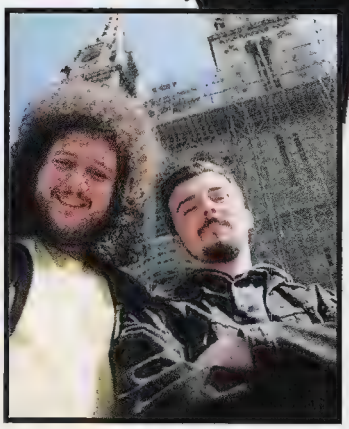

Photo courtesy of Dark Horse Comics; Drago ™ & © Matt Wagner.

Macan (far left) and Biukovic, with Drago (above).

KITCHEN SINK Resumes *Xenozoic Tales*

The multi-award-winning ***Xenozoic Tales*** ends a two-and-a-half-year hiatus in December, when **Kitchen Sink Press** resumes the title with issue #13. Creator/Artist **Mark Schultz** suspended *Xenozoic* projects to work on last fall's relatively unheard of ***Cadillacs and Dinosaurs*** animated series, which is syndicated by the USA Network. With the cartoon's syndication, Schultz can now devote time to the comic book series that spawned *Cadillacs*.

For those unfamiliar with the series, it revolves around Jack Tenrec and the futuristic city of Wassoon. Jack and Hannah Dundee, the Wassoonian ambassador/scientist, have been captured as pawns in a grand geo-political scheme. The series is a skillfully balanced mix of political intrigue, drama, action, romance, and plot—heavy on the plot. An introduction on the inside cover of #13 will bring old fans up to date, and ease new readers into the current story.

"Each issue gives you enough background information to let you know where you're coming in," said Kitchen Sink sales and marketing director Jamie Riehle, who said that production time was the greatest contributor to the series's hiatus. "One problem had been that because his art is as good as it is, people overlooked the story, and we've addressed that. Mark's a really good storyteller as well."

The introduction in #13, said Riehle, will also explain what has happened in the *Xenozoic Tales* to date. The 12 previous issues have been compiled into three softcover trade paperbacks available through back-order.

"I think people should be able to pick up the storyline pretty quickly," said Riehle. "We don't want readers to have to go back and read the first 12 issues. We'd like them to, but they shouldn't have to." Kitchen Sink expects to publish two issues of *Xenozoic Tales* in 1995.

—Gary St. Lawrence

BONEYARD PRESS Wins Lawsuit Over Dahmer Comic

After two years of courtroom wrangling, and $9,300 in legal fees, Boneyard Press publisher **Hart D. Fisher** triumphed when Judge Thomas P. Doherty of the Milwaukee, Wis., Circuit Court dismissed all claims raised by nine relatives of victims of convicted serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer. The relatives had sought a national ban on Boneyard's ***Jeffrey Dahmer: An Unauthorized Biography of a Serial Killer***, as well as damages for emotional distress and recovery of all legal fees.

In a 17-page opinion, Judge Doherty ruled that eight of the plaintiffs could not obtain any relief under the Wisconsin Right to Privacy law, because the victims' right to privacy did not survive them. One plaintiff, Carolyn Smith (whose brother was killed by Dahmer), was portrayed in the comic book, but the judge found that she had not alleged that the portrayal was false, fictional, or unrelated to newsworthy events.

Asked if he felt vindicated by the ruling, Fisher replied that he was "still a little pissed off about the money," referring to the judge's refusal to require plaintiffs to reimburse him for legal fees. "I'm just glad it's over."

—Paul J. Grant

Me Tarzan—You Wrong

Wizard goofed. In our news article in #39 on Dark Horse Comics's forthcoming ***Tarzan Vs. Predator*** series, DH editor Peet Janes is quoted as saying the story will "update" the ape man. Not so—the stories will be told as period pieces, with Tarzan firmly ensconced in the jungles of Africa (not Pellucidar, as we also incorrectly reported) in the time when Edgar Rice Burroughs first set the adventures. ☆

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#15
Annual #1

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#19
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It all happens in DECEMBER!

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ULTRAVERSE®
Comics With Mystery

After Xavier

A candid chat with X-scribes Scott Lobdell and Fabian Nicieza on the future (and past) of the X-Men, who their favorite mutants are, and why the books are *not* unreadable.

er...

It doesn't take much meddling with the timestream to radically alter the face of the X-Men (opposite). Professor X is ironically prophetic (below).

Is it just a bunch of fluff and hyperbole coming out of Marvel's Mutant Office, or are we about to witness the cataclysmic unraveling of Crisis on Infinite X-Earths? Well, hold onto your hats, folks, 'cause it's actually both.

That's right. Those neo-Bullpen thirtysomething folks, whom many critics accuse daily of cranking out the most convoluted cacophony of banal banter this side of *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers*, have put together an all-inclusive storyline, in which they promise to hold your attention for at least six months with soap opera fisticuffs and pseudo-revisionism. It's *Twilight Zone* time, people. They say they're rewriting history. Not.

"You're not going to get that much out of me, because we're trying to keep it relatively quiet," says Fabian Nicieza, three-year veteran-scripter of mutant tales. But Fabes soon relented. Talking from his twice-a-week office at Marvel, with co-mutant-plotter Scott Lobdell sitting alongside him, the writer deals with endless interruptions from annoying assistant editors. But he goes on and on (and on) about the storyline that's meant to turn the Mighty Mutant Universe upside down and inside out. And change nothing. And everything. All at the same time. Confused yet?

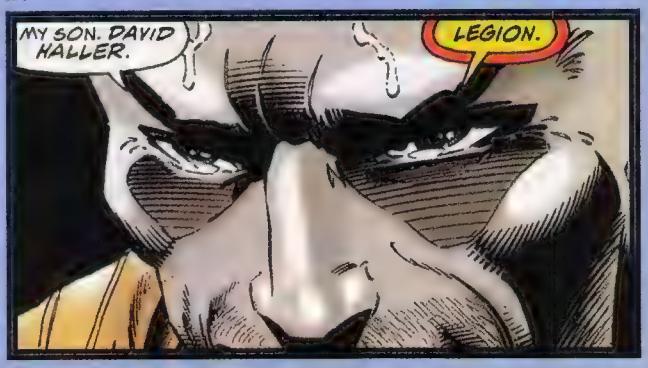
The storyline, which kicks off in November, says Nicieza, "deals with the return of Legion, Charles Xavier's son through Gabrielle [Haller]," who is Israel's Ambassador to Great Britain. Y'see, Chuck and Gabi had a fiery romance during their youth, resulting in...well, you can figure out the rest.

David Haller, AKA Legion, is a schizophrenic, and each of his multiple personalities is gifted with a different mutant power. Moreover, as hundreds of thousands of X-addicts know, Legion has been in a coma for the last few years of X-Men continuity. So, here's the denouement.

"Legion has finally come out of the coma," Nicieza explains. "With his mind completely whole now, and with the joining of all the distinct personalities, comes greater power than he's ever had before. Just think—if we only *knew* of four personalities, and each one had a power, we can reasonably postulate that there were several more personalities which never surfaced, and that each of them had powers, too. So, Legion wakes up from his coma and makes a decision."

Actually, it's more of a conclusion. While still in the coma, with his mind benignly adrift, Legion has the ability to see inside the thoughts of a bevy of characters in the mutant universe. In his astute estimation, things are less than peachy. Moreover, there's quite a lot that he can do about it.

"Legion thinks he's doing the right thing with the choices that he's going to make," Nicieza further notes. "One of those choices centers on going back in time to make a difference in the way that world history unfolds. He wants to be the good son, and show his father Charles that he agrees with his dream."



You remember, folks. *The* dream. The one where mutants and humans live happily ever after, and leave no room whatsoever for spin-offs or limited series or (heaven forfend!) Saturday morning cartoons. (Fear not, true believers. Marvel's Board of Trustees would *never* let that happen.)

"So," Nicieza adds, "Legion makes the decision that Magneto was the real reason why Charles Xavier's dream never came to fruition. It's the yin and the yang that he intends to unbalance, and with that in mind, he goes back in time. He believes that by killing Magneto, Charles Xavier's dream will actually come true in the future."

That's the basic gist of the storyline leading into December. Then the fun begins. Come January, the effects of Legion's actions will bring about drastic changes in all of the mutant universe titles. And Nicieza isn't talking about it. Just ask him.

"What we *will* say is that everything is absolutely different. But everything is also absolutely the same."

Confused yet?

Marvel plans to bring out nine separate limited series for each of the X-Men family titles—*X-Men* becomes *The Amazing X-Men*, *Uncanny*

BY CLIFFORD LAWRENCE

X-MEN AND ALL RELATED CHARACTERS AND ARTWORK SHOWN ™ & © MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

X-Men becomes *The Astonishing X-Men*, *Wolverine* becomes *Weapon X*, *X-Factor* becomes *Factor-X*, *Excalibur* becomes *X-Calibre*, *X-Force* becomes *Gambit and the X-Ternals*, *Generation X* becomes *Generation Next*, *X-Men Unlimited* becomes *X-Men Chronicles*, and *Cable* becomes *X-Man*. Two bookend issues, tentatively called *X-Men: Alpha* and *X-Men: Omega*, will begin and end the storyline (the first bookend comes out during the last week of December, and the second one in the last week in April). The whole sequence of events—a darker past rewriting a very different present—arises from the death of the young Professor X, most likely caused by his own son, Legion.

"Everything is affected," says Nicieza. "For instance, the issue of [*X-Men Chronicles*], which comes out in February, will take a whole new look at the X-Men's first adventure. Each of the [other] eight books will show drastically different versions of all of the concepts of the characters, within the context of the fact that they are still the same."

Cause for Change

Want to make a Marvel writer defensive? Praise DC Comics out loud. "I'd rather not compare what we're doing to DC's *Crisis on Infinite Earths* or *Zero Hour*, quite honestly," says Nicieza. "Not to sound facetious in any way, but what *they* are doing is a radical reorganization of their continuity. *We* are not doing that. We are doing a story. Theirs is a revisionist version of their previous history, in order to hopefully make their future more streamlined. Ours has nothing to do with that whatsoever. Our story affects all of the X-Men titles. That's all it is."

Legion's rewriting of history may not get him a professorship in history at City College of New York (of course, it might), but it *will* introduce readers to a number of new faces.

"For one, everyone will finally see the introduction of Holocaust, a villain that was hinted at back in *Stryfe's Strike File* several years ago," says Nicieza. "We will also see a new character called X-Man."

Don't laugh, folks. Some people worked very hard to come up with these names. There's quite a few old characters coming back, too. In addition to the long-awaited—albeit brief—return of Magneto, his son, Quicksilver, will also make a comeback. So does Morph. No Mimic this time around, but Blink will be back, and so will Dazzler.

"Of course, Gambit and his group, X-Force, will take on the entire Shi'ar Empire by themselves," says Nicieza out of left field.

Wait. *Who* is Gambit's group?

"Gambit's group?" he repeats. "Oh, that's X-Force."

Oh. I get it. Gambit takes over X-Force.

"No. He was *always* in charge of X-Force."

Confused yet?

"A lot of villains are coming back, too," Nicieza blithely goes on, noting that Apocalypse will also return. As will Mastermind. "We'll also see Shadow King in a jar," he says. "Better let him out. His mom wants him home for dinner."

Tell us more, Fabes.

"Can't do it," he replies in his best George Bush impersonation. "Wouldn't be prudent. We would rather that the readers not know every single thing that's going to happen in the book two months before they even buy it. What we *would* like them to know, is that what we're trying to do with the storyline—as with *all* storylines—is provide them an interesting, exciting adventure, with all kinds of character conflicts. We're giving them a chance to see a lot of the characters that they care about in a slightly different light, and we're trying to do a story that will impact the entire X-Men family of titles without necessitating that the readers are forced to buy all eight titles, four issues of each."

Of course, there are nine titles, if you include *X-Men Chronicles*, of which there are two issues. That's 34 total, for those of you who can't add. For those who can, it's the same.

Care Management

These writers obviously care about the characters as much as their readers do. As for which are Nicieza's favorites, "Usually I give the pat answer, which is that I like all of them at the time I'm writing them. But when it comes down to trying to find comfortable favorites, I'd have to say that the Beast is absolutely one of my favorites. I also like Shatterstar and Cannonball immensely, as a writer, because of their potential and how I see them happening.

"And, unlike a lot of readers, I do like Cyclops and Phoenix quite a bit. Especially now, in light of their marital status. Many readers don't like them anymore because Scott and Jean are kind of like the designated adults, and the readers don't like that—they have that scene with their mothers and fathers, or with their own positions of responsibility if they happen to be older readers. I think that the people buying the books prefer the Rogue-ish brigands out there—the Gambits and Cables and Bishops. They provide more of a spark. They are the agitators to the group dynamics. Scott and Jean, and even Hank, are more of a mature presence. Most readers tend to prefer those who disrupt, not those who unite."

Nicieza thinks about it for a minute, then comments on the enormous potential of Cyclops, who he says hasn't been explored properly. "His great potential is his opportunity to enjoy life. Now that he's happily married—and he will *stay* happily married if Scott [Lobdell] and I have anything to say about it—we see the opportunity for him to enjoy his life at long last, and be much happier with his role and his place in the X-Men. I see his maturing as a real opportunity to investigate the character."

Any mutants you hate, Fabian?

X-MEN Timeline

NOTE: ALL DATES LISTED ARE COVER DATES.

SEPT. 1963
X-Men (vol. I) #1: First appearance of Professor X, the original team (Angel, Beast, Cyclops, Iceman, Marvel Girl), and nemesis Magneto.

JAN. 1964
Tales of Suspense #49: First X-Men crossover. Same month as *Uncanny X-Men* #3.

MARCH 1964
X-Men (vol. I) #4: First Brotherhood of Evil Mutants.

NOV. 1965
X-Men (vol. I) #14: First Sentinels.

JAN. 1967
X-Men (vol. I) #28: First Banshee.

OCT. 1968
X-Men (vol. I) #49: First Polaris.

MARCH 1969
X-Men (vol. I) #54: First Alex Summers.

JULY 1969
X-Men (vol. I) #58: First Alex Summers as Havok.

JAN. 1970
X-Men (vol. I) #64: First Sunfire.

MARCH 1970
X-Men (vol. I) #66: Title canceled.

DEC. 1970
X-Men Annual (vol. I) #1 & *Uncanny X-Men* #67: Title revived as series of reprints through #93.

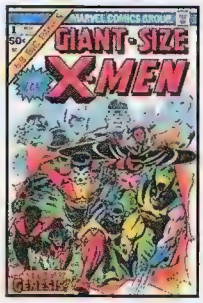
MARCH 1972
Amazing Adventures #11: First "fuzzy" Beast. Begins Beast solo series.

OCT. 1974
Defenders #16: Magneto reduced to infant.

NOV. 1974
Incredible Hulk #181: First full Wolverine appearance.

SUMMER 1975
Giant-Size X-Men #1: Professor X forms new team (Banshee, Colossus, Nightcrawler, Storm, Sunfire, Thunderbird, and Wolverine) to rescue original team.

AUG. 1975
X-Men (vol. I) #94: Old X-Men and



Sunfire leave the team. Cyclops stays to train new team.

OCT. 1975
Champions #1: Angel and Iceman help form the Champions. *X-Men* (vol. I) #95: Thunderbird dies.

NOV. 1976
X-Men #96: First Dr. Moira

The X-Men? Your guess is as good as ours!

MacTaggart.

SEPT. 1976
Avengers #151: Beast joins the Avengers.

OCT. 1976
X-Men (vol. I) #101: Jean Grey is replaced by Phoenix entity.

APRIL 1977
X-Men (vol. I) #104: Magneto is restored to adulthood.

AUG. 1977
Iron Fist #14: First Sabretooth.

APRIL 1978
Ms. Marvel #16: First cameo appearance of Mystique.

APRIL 1979
X-Men (vol. I) #120: First Alpha Flight.

JAN. 1980
X-Men (vol. I) #129: First Hellfire Club, Emma Frost, and Kitty Pryde. Banshee quits.

FEB. 1980
X-Men (vol. I) #130: First Dazzler.

JUNE 1980
X-Men (vol. I) #134: Phoenix becomes Dark Phoenix.

SEPT. 1980
X-Men (vol. I) #137: Death of Phoenix. Jean Grey believed dead.

OCT. 1980
X-Men (vol. I) #138: Jean Grey's funeral, Cyclops leaves.

NOV. 1980
X-Men (vol. I) #139: Angel rejoins, Wolverine changes his costume.

1980
X-Men Annual (vol. I) #4: Kitty joins the team.

JAN. 1981
X-Men (vol. I) #141: First Rachel Summers.

FEB. 1981
Uncanny X-Men #142: The series officially becomes *Uncanny X-Men*.

AUG. 1981
Uncanny X-Men #148: Angel quits.

1981
Avengers Annual #10: First Rogue.

OCT. 1981
Uncanny X-Men #150: Magneto rethinks his evil ways.

1981
Uncanny X-Men Annual #5: Cyclops rejoins.

SEPT. 1982
Wolverine (mini-series) #1

1982
Marvel Graphic Novel #4: First New Mutants.

MARCH 1983
New Mutants #1

APRIL 1983
Uncanny X-Men #168: First Madelyne Pryor.

JULY 1983
Uncanny X-Men #171: Rogue joins.

AUG. 1983
Alpha Flight #1

DEC. 1983
Magik #1: Illyana Rasputin gains her powers.

AUG. 1984
Uncanny X-Men #184: First Forge.

NOV. 1984
Kitty Pryde and Wolverine #1

DEC. 1984
Uncanny X-Men #188: Rachel Summers joins.

MORE THAN ZERO

"This is absolutely *not* a response to DC's *Zero Hour*," insists Bob Harras, Mutant Office Guru. "This is really one of those weird things. I came up with the premise for this at one of the story sessions for the TV show. They wanted to do another Bishop story, and, because I have a good relationship with all the people there, I said, 'Well, you can't do another time-travel thing like you've done in the other two episodes. You've got to come up with something different.' While sitting there talking to these guys, I realized that this was good for the book. So, when I came back to [the Marvel offices], I got everyone together and we came up with this idea. Then I heard about *Zero Hour*, but I didn't really know what it was." Harras won't give any more details than that, so I ask him The Big Question. That all-important issue that nips at the subconscious of every mutant addict. Where is Magneto?

"There're big plans for Magneto next summer," the Senior X-Editor says. "I can't tell you what it is yet, but let's just say it will have major ramifications for Gambit and Rogue."

Oh, the plot thickens...

"The biggest challenge for me is redesigning the looks of the characters," says *X-Men* artist Andy Kubert. Andy is home in New Jersey, 10 minutes away from where I live, but we do this by phone anyway. Lifestyles of the rich and lazy. "All of the characters in this crossover will look different," he says, "and I'm trying to keep in mind the characters' varied backgrounds when redesigning them. It's not just costumes—you have to think about where they came from, to see where they would go, in terms of looks. Take the Beast; we can't totally change him, but I'm making him look really bestial, really savage. Really ugly."

Just like the *Star Trek* episode, "Mirror, Mirror," I comment. The one where Spock has a beard.

"Yeah," says Andy. "Everyone gets a new look. For instance, for Cyclops, I'm redesigning the visor, his uniform, his hair. He'll be a much darker, grittier Cyclops. A *real* Cyclops, with just one eye."

Sounds like a lot of work, I say.

"It's not that difficult," he answers. "You start at the head and work your way down. It's really a lot of fun. It's a little intimidating, because you're redesigning characters that have been around for 30 years, and you're worried about what fans want to see. But I think they're going to like it."

Will the X-followers enjoy this renovation of their favorite mutants' history? Only time will tell.

—Clifford Lawrence

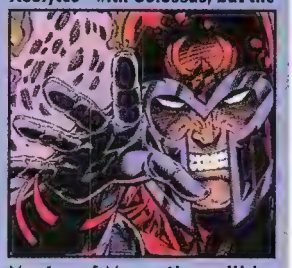
AFTER "AFTER XAVIER"

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER YOU TEAR APART THE X-MEN?

Aside from shoe-horning *The Amazing X-Men* and *The Astonishing X-Men* into what was once the adjective-less *X-Men* and *The Uncanny X-Men*, Marvel Senior X-Editor, Bob Harras, adds that after the "After Xavier: The Age of Apocalypse" storyline runs its course—during what he calls "the Neg-Time"—a lot of currently existing storylines will come to a head.

Among the major developments, Harras includes the following:

- [illegible] will escape from Avalon—the orbiting space station that is the current home of the Acolytes—with Colossus, but the



Master of Magnetism will be severely wounded in the process. As a result, he will develop amnesia,

"Quite a few, actually, but I can never remember them."

"Anything I write," says Lobdell.

Nicieza laughs. "That's not true. There are characters that I don't feel I have an affinity for. For instance, I don't feel that comfortable with Storm, because I've never really written her that much. And I don't feel that comfortable with Charles Xavier, because if I were him, I would do things differently. It's kind of hard to write a character that you have a disagreement with."

What's to disagree with?

"If I were Charles," says Nicieza, "I wouldn't be as *reactive*—I'd be more *proactive*. I am more of an aggressive personality, and if I had the means at my disposal to make a difference in the world, like Charles does, I would be more aggressive about doing that. But he has also lived a longer life, and a more varied life, so he makes his decisions based on those experiences."

Legion is about to open the Pandora's Box (right after he finishes eating his bottom lip).

So which character is closest to the way Nicieza really thinks?

"Speedball, actually," he laughs. "But I'm not writing *The New Warriors* anymore, so I've got to come up with a new answer, don't I? It always was Speedball, quite frankly. But I guess I'd have to say that the closest to the way I think now is probably the Beast. He has a sense of duty and responsibility to life, but also a sense of enjoyment about it."

"You know who I really like?" Lobdell asks. "Charles. The guy who started it all. Charles is fascinating and exciting to explore," Lobdell continues. "He's like Gandhi and Martin Luther King and Plato and Christ."

Tall order, Lobdell.

"I also like Nightcrawler tremendously," he says, "although in

Iceman #1

MARCH 1985
New Mutants #25: First Legion.

SEPT. 1985
Longshot #1: First Longshot.

NOV. 1985
Nightcrawler #1

DEC. 1985
Uncanny X-Men #200: Injured Professor X flies off into space with Lilandra, leaving Magneto in charge of the X-Men and New Mutants.
X-Men/Alpha Flight #1

JAN. 1986
Uncanny X-Men #201: First Nathan Christopher Charles Summers (baby Cable). Cyclops leaves.
Avengers #263: Avengers find Jean Grey in an undersea cocoon.

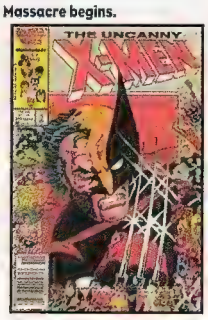
Fantastic Four #286: Jean Grey revived. It's discovered that she and Phoenix were separate entities.

FEB. 1986
X-Factor #1. Scott Summers reunites with Jean Grey. The original X-Men (Angel, Beast, Cyclops, Iceman, Jean Grey) form X-Factor.

JUNE 1986
X-Factor #5: First Apocalypse.

MAR. 1987
X-Factor #14: Angel loses his wings.

NOV. 1986
Uncanny X-Men #211: Mutant Massacre begins.



1986
New Mutants Annual #2: First Psylocke.
Uncanny X-Men Annual #10: Longshot joins.

JAN. 1987
Uncanny X-Men #213: Psylocke joins.

FEB. 1987
Uncanny X-Men #214: Dazzler joins.

JULY 1987
Uncanny X-Men #219. Havok rejoins.

SEPT. 1987
Uncanny X-Men #221: First Mr. Sinister.

DEC. 1987
X-Factor #23: Angel becomes Archangel.

JAN. 1988-MARCH 1988
Fall of the Mutants (*Uncanny X-Men* #225-#227, *X-Factor* #24-#26, *New Mutants* #59-#61): Dazzler, Longshot, Rogue, Storm, Wolverine, Colossus, Psylocke, and Havok all believed dead by the world; Doug Ramsey killed.

1988
Excalibur Special Edition: First Excalibur. Believing their X-Men teammates dead, Kitty, Nightcrawler, and Phoenix help form a new team.

OCT. 1988
Uncanny X-Men #235: First Genosha.

recent years he's become something of a minor character...If I could be any of the characters, I guess it would be Nightcrawler."

Before moving on, I have to congratulate Lobdell for penning *Alpha Flight* #106—the infamous issue where Northstar tells the comic book world of his homosexuality. I tell him that I think the AIDS issue was handled sensitively, and that it was a rather gutsy move for an usually uptight Marvel Comics.

"It's funny you should mention that, because Northstar may end up joining the X-Men," Lobdell says. "He's one of the new candidates."

If that's the case, would Lobdell pick up the gay issue again?

"If he appears in the book, yes. I don't think it would be fair to introduce him into the book and not explore every facet of the character."

A World Without Mutants

Nicieza and Lobdell then spent some time talking about the Marvel dynamic. About where Marvel would be without mutants.

"Stan Lee and Jack Kirby created the concept of mutants in '63, and they didn't become popular to this level until '81," says Nicieza. "I think that if Marvel didn't have mutants, something else would have been created to fill that void. Man-machines, or whatever...Chris Claremont was really the guy who put this together, and based the mutants' problem set on the prejudice analogy, which became very important to the books. So, although in the context of the larger Marvel Universe it doesn't make as much sense, maybe that's one reason why the X-books tend to be a little insular and unto themselves. But something would have come along to fill the void."

While Lobdell naps, Nicieza ponders the question further. "One of my bigger problems with the context of all this, is that it's odd to have a world that hates and fears mutants, but has no problem with Iron Man and Thor."

Not at all, I argue. Iron Man is a human being who uses good ol' American technology to battle the baddies. And Thor has important hair.

"The Marvel Universe has always been, and can always be, an incredibly viable soup mixture of creativity," answers Nicieza, switching into corporate mode. "Somewhere along the lines, someone would have come up with something that was analogous to mutants."

Mutant Bashing

I change the subject to Marvel bashing, and the mutant-book bashing in particular that we witness on various computer services and in numerous letter columns.

"I've been with the company for nine years, and I've dealt with it in all different phases," says Nicieza. "It starts from the basic premise that in this country we want to knock down number one a peg or two. That's always the case. When you're an underdog, everyone likes you; when you reach the top, nobody likes you. That's a natural pre-

and wander around for quite some time, knowing neither who he is, how powerful he is, nor everything that he's been responsible for. Desperate to learn how to control his haywire magnetic powers, he finally turns to the X-Men for help. A stunned and vengeful team of X-Men must face having its greatest foe appeal in the form of an innocent. Magneto's presence will test Xavier's dream to the breaking point.

● [redacted], fresh as a daisy from his healing and resurrection in his own title (*Wolverine* or

Weapon X: take your pick), will return as a full-time member of the X-Men...but not quite the same as he was the last time he wore the uniform.

According to Harras, 1995 will see the start of a storyline that introduces a major new hero and a major new villain. There will also be another ongoing X-book, the 10th, joining the fold, following the four-month run of "After Xavier: The Age of Apocalypse."

"I can't really say much more than you already know, or more than what's in the press release," he says. "But 'After Xavier' is a four-month arc that will conclude in April. After that, we'll return to the status quo."

Harras chose the term "status quo" rather than normal, "because nothing is ever normal around here."

When that "status quo" resumes, the four months that passed in "After Xavier" will have also passed for the X-Men and all related titles. Harras says readers will rejoin the X-books in the midst of already-begun storylines and will be caught up in due time through events in the individual titles.

"There will be a lot of changes in the books and characters after April," Harras says. "The details are being ironed out on a day-to-day basis."

—Gary St. Lawrence

X-MEN CHRONICLES

Even though we're now told that it's always been the Mutants instead of the X-Men, *X-Men Unlimited* still has a role to play in 1995—that of historian. Editor Kelly Corvese says *X-Men Unlimited* will become *X-Men Chronicles*, and tie in with the rest of the "After Xavier: The Age of Apocalypse" continuity.

X-Men Unlimited #8 and #9 will become *X-Men Chronicles* #1 and #2, respectively. "The first issue [of *X-Men Chronicles*] will tell the first story of the X-Men, and of how Magneto formed them, instead of Charles Xavier," says Corvese.

Though these stories are very independent, and will revolve around many different characters, Corvese says there will be some familiarity when compared to the way things happened as we remember them. Five or six familiar characters from the X-Men pool will appear.

"But this is their first outing, the events of which align with the continuity of the rest of the time-flip," Corvese says. "[However,] the events in *X-Men Chronicles* happen before the events of 'After Xavier,' when the X-Men have already been well-established and operating for 10 or 15 years."

Corvese says *Chronicles* will initially show the mutants of today as they were then—among them, Rogue, who's only 14 years old at the time. Other members will seem the same, yet different, and react quite differently from how their normal counterparts would and did. Corvese advised against expecting these X-Men to simply go up against Unus and the Blob, the way it "really happened."

Chronicles will focus on the

NOV. 1988
Wolverine (ongoing series) #1

DEC. 1988-APRIL 1989
Inferno (*Uncanny X-Men* #240-#243, *X-Factor* #36-#39, *New Mutants* #71-73, *Excalibur* #6-#7): The X-Men finally meet X-Factor; the teams battle each other and Madelyne Pryor, who, as the Goblin Queen, looses demons upon the world, and enlists Havok in her war.

MAY 1989
Uncanny X-Men #244: First Jubilee.
New Mutants #75: Magneto definitively withdraws from following Professor X's methods of helping mutantkind.

AUG. 1989
Uncanny X-Men #247: Rogue accidentally falls through the Siege Perilous.

NOV. 1989
Uncanny X-Men #251: Storm, Colossus, Psylocke, Dazzler, and Havok go through the Siege Perilous.

DEC. 1989
Uncanny X-Men #256: Psylocke reappears, her mind and powers having been transferred into the body of Kwannon, an assassin.

MARCH 1990
New Mutants #87: First Cable and Stryfe.

AUG. 1990
Uncanny X-Men #266: First Cambit.

NOV. 1990-JAN. 1991
X-Tinction Agenda (*Uncanny X-Men* #270-272, *X-Factor* #60-62, *New Mutants* #95-97): The X-teams battle Cameron Hodge and the Genegineers in Genosha.

APRIL 1991
New Mutants #100: Final issue; first X-Force.

MAY 1991
Uncanny X-Men #276: Professor X returns.

AUG. 1991
X-Force #1

AUG. 1991-SEPT. 1991
The Muir Island Saga (*Uncanny X-Men* #278-#280; *X-Factor* #69, #70): Legion's mind believed destroyed in battle with Shadow King. Iceman, Jean Grey, Beast, Archangel, and Cyclops return to the X-Men.

OCT. 1991
Uncanny X-Men #281: Hellions killed by attack of Fitzroy & Sentinels.
X-Factor #71: Havok leads new lineup.
X-Men (vol. 2) #1: Professor Xavier splits the X-Men into Blue (Cyclops, Wolverine, Beast, Psylocke, Cambit) and Gold (Storm, Iceman, Archangel, Jean Grey, Colossus) strike teams, with Banshee, Forge, and Jubilee in reserve/support roles. Magneto returns to active conflict with X-Men.

NOV. 1991
Uncanny X-Men #282: First Bishop.

relationships between Magneto, Rogue, and Gambit (who will be quite busy himself, romping around with his lover Lila Cheney as intergalactic jewel thieves in *Gambit and the X-Ternals*). Magneto and Rogue's son is named Charles, and yes, he's going to have mutant powers. But Corvese declines to say what they are just now.

"Issue #2 will revolve around Magneto, Rogue, Gambit, and Charles. It's a love triangle with a real twist," he says. "Magneto can touch Rogue; Gambit can't. Magneto's powers can manipulate Rogue's in this universe, the same way they did when he kissed her before in the 'real reality.' In fact, Rogue is initially with Gambit, but leaves him for Magneto because Gambit can't touch her. These are the same basic characters, but they're very different people from those you've known."

The post-"After Xavier" time frame is uncertain as of this writing. Corvese says a number of story arcs are brewing, but he doesn't know which arcs will see publication first. Howard Mackie, Ian Edginton, and Mark Waid are each currently writing new stories. But, according to Corvese, those won't be up for use until about seven or eight months from now, and it's too early to determine when each will run.

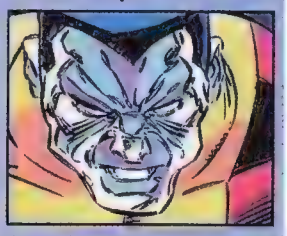
—Gary St. Lawrence

EXCALIBUR

Nothing is constant, except change. This principle applies to the roster of characters in *Excalibur* in 1995, both during its "After Xavier" run as *X-Calibre* and after.

Despite the absence of Captain Britain and Phoenix (who combined in *Excalibur* #75 to form Britanic), who may or may not be written back into the fold next year, the X-Brits will not be lacking in power, as two old friends cross the pond to join the team.

Colossus, after escaping from Avalon—the orbiting space station that houses the Acolytes—feels that he has nowhere else to turn. No longer aligning himself with the philosophy behind the X-Men, and having been both hero and villain, Colossus declines Cyclops's offer to rejoin the X-Men and instead opts to knock on the



doors of Castle Excalibur. This, of course, reunites [illegible] with Kitty Pryde (AKA Shadowcat), answering the longtime fan demand to rekindle the romance that was so often proclaimed as predestined in the pages of *The Uncanny X-Men*.

A touch of feral animal magnetism will be added to the team when Wolfsbane joins, fresh from a bitter fallout with her former X-Factor teammates over Mystique's membership. Wolfsbane will encounter surprising aspects of her personality and is expected to grow

considerably with her new team.

Core member Nightcrawler will team up with his sister/twin/fellow alien/counterpart (and not mother, as revealed in normal Marvel continuity), [illegible], in the pages of *X-Calibre* to embark upon a quest to find the woman named Destiny.

"It's difficult enough to be writing entertainment for an audience that varies from age 8 to 48...you have to try to cover as many bases as you possibly can."

—Fabian Nicieza

disposition that people in this country have.

"Secondly, most of the people who do the knocking are people who have outgrown the kinds of material that Marvel tends to publish. I can go back and reread the kinds of things I liked as a kid, now as an adult, and say, 'I can't believe I ever liked this stuff.' Some of it still carries, but a lot of it doesn't. But I was 13 or 14, then. There's a reason why I viewed it the way I viewed it. I was a *kid*."

By this time, Lobdell manages to speak again. "Unreadable? *The X-Men*? I think that's very, very humorous." He lets out a carnival laugh. "I think that the books are more readable [now] than they *ever* were. By the same token, there was a long period of time where they were less so. It's very amusing, though, because one would argue that the people who find it unreadable are the ones who aren't reading it. In their defense, I think that the book definitely has soap opera qualities, and some people don't enjoy that aspect of it. They want their comic books like they want their situation comedies. But if you go back and read the last two years of stories in *Uncanny X-Men*, the only issue that wasn't a complete story was the 'Blood Ties' crossover. Other than that, each story was self-contained. So, for those who find it unreadable, I don't want to sound snotty, but it's a source of amusement."

It's OK to sound snotty, I tell him.

So, Nicieza gets snotty, too. "I personally don't read that many superhero books anymore, because I don't have that much of a need for it. A lot of the bashing comes from the fact that there is a resentment that they have outgrown this work. The work hasn't grown up with them...I was recently on [the computer bulletin board] America Online, and I answered somebody regarding this. I told them that it's difficult enough to be writing entertainment for an audience that varies from age 8 to 48, in that you have to try to cover as many bases as you possibly can. You can't target something specifically for an audience unless you intend to. There's no way that the X-Men, being what they are, are going to be targeted to 20- to 30-year-olds, or you'd end up alienating a huge body of your readership. I have six-year-olds coming up [to me at conventions] and asking for autographs, and I have

MAY 1992
X-Men (vol. 2) #8: Bishop joins.

OCT. 1992
Cable (mini-series) #1

NOV. 1992
X-Men Adventures #1: Adaptations of cartoon episodes begin. First Morph.

NOV. 1992-JAN. 1993
X-Cutioner's Song (*Uncanny X-Men* #294-#296, *X-Men* #14-#16, *X-Factor* #84-#86, *X-Force* #16-#18): The X-teams battle Stryfe.

MAY 1993
Cable (ongoing series) #1

JUNE 1993
X-Men Unlimited #1

JULY 1993-NOV. 1993
Fatal Attractions (*X-Factor* #92, *X-Force* #25, *Uncanny X-Men*

#304, *X-Men* #25, *Wolverine* #75, *Excalibur* #71): Colossus quits. Wolverine's adamantium removed by Magneto. Magneto "brainwiped" by Prof. X.

AUG. 1993
Deadpool #1 (first mini-series)
Sabretooth #1 (mini-series)

OCT. 1993
X-Men 2099 #1

DEC. 1993
Gambit #1 (mini-series)

MARCH 1994
X-Factor #100: Jamie Madrox dies.
X-Men #30: Jean Grey and Scott Summers get married.

JULY 1994
Uncanny X-Men #314: Recently awakened from coma, Emma Frost, in the body of Iceman, discovers death of her Hellions and abandons her former ways.

SEPT. 1994-OCT. 1994
Phalanx Covenant (*Uncanny X-Men* #316, #317; *X-Men* #36, #37; *X-Factor* #106; *X-Force* #38; *Excalibur* #82; *Wolverine* #85; *Cable* #16): Professor X's com-

puters and files destroyed. Battle with Phalanx. First Generation X.

NOV. 1994
Generation X #1: Banshee and White Queen head new team.
Uncanny X-Men #318: Jubilee leaves to join Generation X.
X-Factor #108: Legion "awakens."

DEC. 1994
Bishop #1

JAN. 1995
Rogue #1: Rogue gets her own mini-series.

FEB. 1995
Cable #20: Cable heads back in time to stop Legion.
Uncanny X-Men #321: Lilandra returns to Earth with news of universe's demise. X-Men go back in time to stop Legion.
X-Men #41: In past, X-Men try to stop Legion from killing Magneto and changing history.
X-Men: Alpha #1: Death of Professor X.

—William Christensen & Mark Seifert

COME TO KRUSTYLAND!

KRUSTY COMICS #1 – DEBUTS THIS JANUARY!

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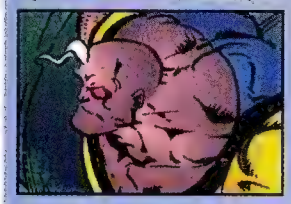
Rampant allusions and rumors—which have been spread all over newsgroups on the internet—that Mystique and Destiny are lovers in this reality have little, if anything, to do with their "After Xavier" counterparts, as X-Editor Bob Harras has alluded to the fact that Destiny is actually the mother of the blue mutants.

—Gary St. Lawrence

X-FACTOR

Originally a book that starred the original X-Men, *X-Factor* has mutated, and will mutate even further in 1995, as drastic changes unfold in the pages and ranks of *X-Factor*, according to editor Kelly Corvese.

In *X-Factor* #111, before the timeflips in "After Xavier," [illegible] (AKA



Strong Guy) will have a massive heart attack and may actually die.

"It's related to Lila Cheney," Corvese explains. "She steals something from an alien race, and Guido and X-Factor have to help her return it. After she returns the item, the aliens try to kill Lila; Guido saves her, but suffers a heart attack doing it. When we come back to this reality, Guido's in the hospital and they're trying to figure out what to do about it."

In "After Xavier," the Alex Summers (AKA Havok) of Factor X is not the Alex we know. Corvese says that during the timeflip, we'll see an extremely strained relationship between Alex and Scott Summers, the adopted sons of Mr. Sinister.

"In *Factor X* [that term refers more to the gene than the group], the Beast is experimenting with the gene pool, altering the genetic makeup of the mutants in the pens. [He's] working for Mr. Sinister. Factor X...they're all Sinister's cronies," Corvese says. "But Scott will have a feeling that things aren't the way they should be, and in the third issue, Jean Grey shows up. This is when and why he finally gets motivated to stop [the villain] Apocalypse, and he becomes a very reluctant hero. One of the Summers brothers doesn't survive. But I won't say which one."

In May or June, following the "After Xavier" storyline, Wolfsbane will leave X-Factor to join the British mutant team, Excalibur.

"To make up for the loss of Rahne, we're going to have Val Cooper force Mystique to join the group, to everyone's dismay," Corvese says. "Six months to a year after that, Val's also going to force Sabretooth into X-Factor, after he has a violent fallout with Charles Xavier. But that's not for quite a while yet. It's getting to the point where X-Factor's becoming an all-villain group. No...not really."

There's also going to be an as-yet-unnamed character from the timeflip universe coming on board. In a nutshell, Corvese explains this intricate plot development as "X-Factor's first non-Caucasian character, finally." We have seen his counterpart in the regular universe already, though Corvese gives no details as to exactly who this character is. The timeflip version of this new character has a twin brother in his universe, but the version in "our" regular universe does not have a brother. During "After Xavier," that twin brother in the timeflip universe dies. At some point during the Apocalypse storyline, the character from the timeflip universe comes here, meaning that two of the same characters—the timeflip version, who just lost his twin brother, and the version in "our" universe—will be existing at the same time in the same universe. What this means to the very fabric of our universe is still up in the air. The new character's name and powers are currently being ironed out by writer John Francis Moore.

According to Corvese, the entire tone of *X-Factor* will change next year, both in and out of "After Xavier."

"Val Cooper's forcing Mystique to join causes an uproar among all the members. And then doing the same with Sabretooth, knowing the history he has with Mystique, drives everyone crazy," he says. "Whatever fun or light feeling X-Factor had in the past won't be prevalent now. With all these new characters joining, it just isn't going to be the same anymore."

—Gary St. Lawrence

X-FILES

For those who thrive on the technical and personal information on their favorite children of the atom, a "kicker" to the set of nine "After Xavier" titles will debut as a 32-page one-shot in January.

X-Files, like *Stryfe's Strike File* of two years ago, will detail Apocalypse's strategic files on the Mutants in the timeflip universe. Edited by Kelly Corvese, *X-Files* (bearing no connection to the sci-fi television series of the same name) will provide comprehensive background data, technical synopses, power and power-level charts, character profiles, and personal information on all the characters.

Corvese says *X-Files* should be interesting to every fan of any X-title, "because nobody's ever seen these characters in this universe before. Mutant and non-mutant alike."

—Gary St. Lawrence

Welcome to the jungle.

48-year-olds coming up for the same thing.

"If you don't like Marvel because we're not doing [DC's alternative imprint] Vertigo, go buy Vertigo. Outside of *Sandman*, the average sales on those books is 25,000. If the majority of people didn't like what I was writing, we wouldn't be selling half-a-million copies on a regular basis; we wouldn't be the number one and number two books in the industry. We must be doing something right. To the vocal minority who doesn't like it, guess what? Don't buy the book!

"I write for myself," Nicieza continues. "I can't write for an audience. I tried that and it doesn't work for me. If I were writing a Vertigo book, I'd write it very differently than if I were writing *The New Warriors*. I have to approach it that way. A lot of the people who are reading books like that, and complain about a book [published by] Dark Horse [Comics], are just being absurd. That's like eating an orange, and complaining that it doesn't taste like steak. It's not *supposed* to. Why was a book like *Marvels* very well-received? Because the vocal minority of people who don't enjoy some of the more mainstream books got to read something that they *did* enjoy...But I'm tired of the bashing that comes from people who have outgrown what they're bashing. My response to those people is: 'Get a life.' I have, and I kind of like mine.

"Currently, I'm spending a lot of time on this project, because it's kind of fallen on me to shepherd most of the books in the right direction. Shepherd. Yeah, that's the right job description."

Nicieza has put us in touch with those who *don't* read the X-books. I guess it's up to Lobdell to explain who *does* reads them.

"I really wouldn't know," Lobdell honestly admits. "The Saturday cartoon has changed everything. There're little kids, [and then] there're businessmen in their forties whose favorite character is still Wolverine...The trick is to write solid, readable stories for the masses."

"We're trying to create a storyline which allows the readers to read that which they want to read and enjoy," concludes Nicieza. "A reader who likes *Cable*, but doesn't usually read *Excalibur*, doesn't need to buy both during this time period. They *can* read both, and I think that reading all of the titles would enhance the total experience, but it's not demanded. We're working hard to keep the books complete on their own. It's a tough job, but I *think* we're pretty close to pulling it off." ☆

Clifford Lawrence, a freelance writer based in New Jersey, likes Marvel comics. Really. His own irreverent fiction appears in Aardwolf Comics.

Marvel, X-Men including all character names and likenesses: TM & © 1994 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. All rights reserved. Distributed by Fleer Corp.

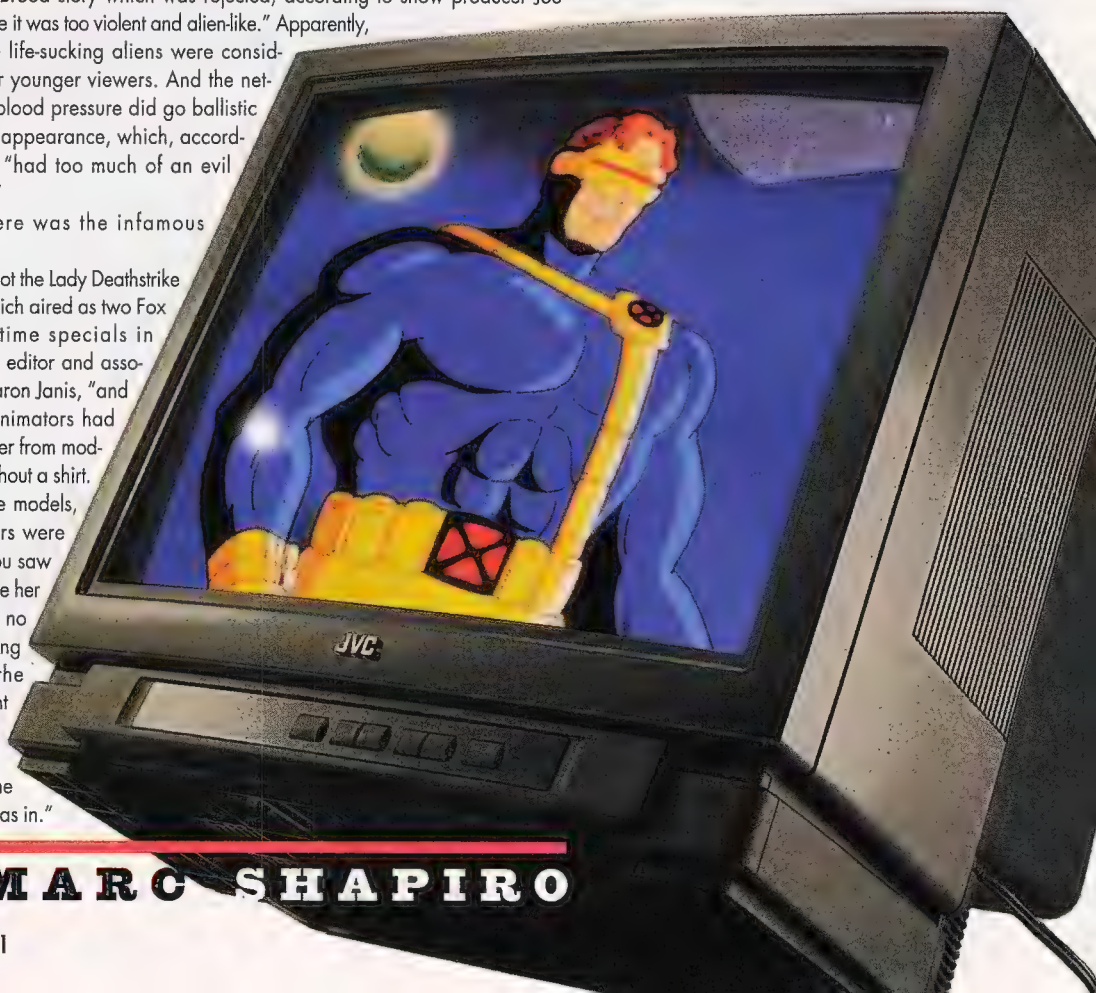
The *X-Men* animated series continues to grow in popularity, but that's not stopping the producers from taking risks.

A Different Take

Television's censors have had little to get upset about with the first 65 episodes of the *X-Men* animated series. Oh, there was that nasty little business with the Brood story which was rejected, according to show producer Joe Calamari, "because it was too violent and alien-like." Apparently, the images of the life-sucking aliens were considered too harsh for younger viewers. And the network's collective blood pressure did go ballistic at Nightcrawler's appearance, which, according to Calamari, "had too much of an evil look to suit them."

And then there was the infamous breast incident.

"We had just got the Lady Deathstrike episodes back [which aired as two Fox Network prime-time specials in August]," chuckles editor and associate producer Sharon Janis, "and I found that the animators had copied the character from models that had her without a shirt. [This] is OK on the models, but these animators were so good that all you saw in the episodes were her breasts. There was no way we were going to get that past the censors, so we sent them back and the studio had to redraw every scene Lady Deathstrike was in."



BY MARC SHAPIRO

The X-Men, along with thousands of fans, await approval for a fourth season.

Based on the popular Marvel Comics line of titles, the *X-Men* animated series is currently exploding into its third season of 20 episodes (the first two seasons contained 13 episodes each), and the guys in the trenches are awaiting a decision on whether another 30 will be added to the workload. For the record, *X-Men* head writer Eric Lewald is cautiously optimistic.

"There's a lot of lawyers involved with this show that make those decisions," quips Lewald. "We might all drop dead from exhaustion, but I think we could easily sustain another 30 episodes."

The third season, admittedly, has had a few technical bumps in the road. Testing the waters with some new animation studios—most notoriously one based in the Philippines—has resulted in the aforementioned breast glitch, and had a certain Professor Charles Xavier looking occasionally like *Star Trek: The Next Generation*'s Captain Jean-Luc Picard. But ultimately, the adventures of Wolverine, Storm, Xavier, Cyclops, and the others have continued to chug along, thanks to a successful collaboration between Marvel and Fox that is producing—by animated daily/Saturday morning standards—deep characters, complex plots, high drama, and—the bottom line—something fairly close to the comic book experience of the monthly X-Men titles.

"The technical aspects of the stories are much more complicated than other animated shows," declares Calamari, who, with Fox's executive director of programming, Sidney Iwanter, and Marvel's X-Men comic book group editor, Bob Harras, form the white collar trio who regularly roll up their sleeves to guide the wild lives of the X-Men. "We have more true-to-life situations, anywhere from 10 to 14 characters in each episode, and lots of stories going on at the same time. You get problems between the X-Men and humans, the X-Men and mutants, character histories, constant flashbacks. I think we're doing a real good job of interpreting 30 years of X-Men history."

The history of the *X-Men* animated series goes back to 1986, when Margaret Loesch (now a Fox Network bigwig, but then an employee of the Marvel Productions Company) and Calamari teamed up to shoot a half-hour *X-Men* animated pilot with an eye toward finding a home, in the form of a series, with one of the networks. Their effort failed.

In the meantime, animation came of age and, to a certain extent, respectability. Producer/director Larry Houston credits the success of such shows as *Batman: The Animated Series* with "opening the door" for *X-Men*. "The fact that that show—and others—were good shows, made it a lot easier for us to step in with *X-Men* and say, 'Hey, we can be good too,'" Houston says.

"Margaret went to Fox years later," recalls Calamari, "and I approached her again about a possible X-Men project. I reminded her that now she had the power to get *X-Men* made. She agreed that she did have the power, and so, an initial order for 65 episodes was made."

Lewald was brought in to head up a writing team that, at one time, included such comic book lights as Len Wein, Jan Strnad, and Elliot Maggin. Houston—producer, director, and authority on storyboarding and animation—filled out another *X-Men* slot. Then came the big decision: what to do?

"When we started [in February '92], people weren't really sure what this was going to be," recalls Lewald. "Previous Marvel shows had not been successful, and there had not been a big action show like this on Saturday morning in quite a while. There was the question of whether to play the show to a younger or older audience. But ultimately, nobody was really sure how this was going to work out."

Houston claims that the fact that the members of the creative team behind *X-Men* were also big X-Men fans, had a lot to do with the decision to make close—with artistic license—adaptations of the comic books. "I know this stuff. I grew up with it for 30 years. Nobody really wanted to get too far away from the source material," offers Houston.

Lewald states that his team immediately went to the source: 30 years worth of X-Men comics. "Obviously, we couldn't read them all in two weeks, and we had to get the show off the ground. So we decided to use them as reference material to get to know the characters. Once we picked the main characters, the writers and I got together and tried to come up with some interesting stories we could tell with these people."

Avoiding literal adaptations, according to Calamari, was largely a matter of logistics. "The number of characters that appear in a

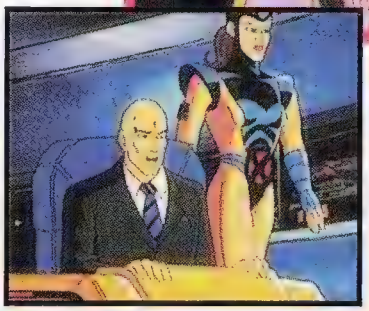
X-Men and all characters and artwork shown ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group. Photos by Harry Peterson

Feared and hated by the world they've sworn to protect, life as an X-Man may be exciting, but it's not necessarily pleasant.

typical *X-Men* comic book is a lot more than can appear in a television show. X-Men comics tend to be more violent than we can do on television. And finally, a television story generally has to be told in one or two episodes, while the comic book stories could go on for a number of issues. So, it finally seemed that taking the theory behind the comic books and creating new stories was the right way to go."

But not necessarily the path of least resistance, as Lewald recalls of those pre-production follies.

"In Saturday morning television, they don't allow you to kill off characters," bemoans the writer, "but we wanted to make it clear to Fox and their [censors] that we needed to have somebody important—somebody that the kids knew—die in the fighting, so that we could show [the viewers] that the jeopardy and the consequence of the violence was real. It was a struggle with Fox, but we finally got a partial agreement."



A minor character from the Marvel Universe, Changeling, was chosen to buddy up to Wolverine in the pilot episode before dying at the hands of the Sentinels. Then fate stepped in, in the guise of another comic book character with the same name.

"Even though Marvel had the name first, there could have been a legal fight [with DC, over the company's New Titans character Changeling] and we just didn't have the time, so we decided to use the character, but change his name to Morph," reports Lewald.

The pilot aired and Morph died (offscreen). Then the unexpected happened. Morph's two-episode appearance had generated a lot of interest, and ultimately made him one of the more popular characters of the first 13 episodes. Lewald and the others' solution was to bring him back alive in a second season episode, where Mr. Sinister "saves" him from the brink of death, making him a pawn in his war with the X-Men.

"We don't have plans to use Morph much in future episodes," relates Lewald, "and since, in his return, we've established that he's somewhat damaged, we were thinking of explaining his absence away by saying he was in therapy. Or maybe we'll just kill him off again," he jokes.

With the exception of what Lewald describes as "a very loose translation of the 'Days of Future Past' saga," the first 26 *X-Men* scripts were all "original stories."

"We took bits and pieces of the comic books and incorporated them into the series," he says. "We took a sequence from the comics where Storm battles [Callisto], the Queen of the Morlocks, and incorporated it into one of the stories. We did one story during the first season where Wolverine goes off to be alone, but Sabretooth shows up. In that episode we combined two comic book elements: Wolverine's feelings for Jean Grey, and the fact that Wolverine and Sabretooth hate each other. The *story* was not from the books, but the *feelings* definitely were."

Lewald, in constant communication with Houston and X-editor Harras, continued the learn-as-you-go method through the initial series of scripts. "We were always looking to create the strongest story we could, while staying true to the comic book characters and their world. That wasn't always easy. The characters in the books have changed moods many times over the years, and so a great deal of discussion seemed to center around things like 'Which Storm or Magneto do we play?' There was so much material that we were forced to pick and choose to keep from being overwhelmed. Once we established what we felt was the strongest incarnation of these characters, we decided to just stick with them."

Giving words to these animated characters is the next step, once the scripts have been finalized. This is done in Canada, where a much smaller acting pool to choose from is the downside. So, what's the upside? A residual process that gives producers more bang for less buck. The *X-Men* voice-over process works something like this:

"The producers [Iwanter and Calamari] fly up to Canada once a week," says Lewald. "They spend Monday and Tuesday casting the show, record an episode on Wednesday, and another on Thursday. The voice-over work is always done in conjunction with the storyboards being done, and before the animation."

Once the "pink pages" (TV jargon for a second draft) of an *X-Men* script are satisfactory, it's time to storyboard. Houston, with a definite attitude that *X-Men* is far more ambitious than most animated series, molds his storyboarding approach to fit the show's lofty goals.

"We're trying to give the show a more live-action film quality, as opposed to the standard cartoon show cutting," he says of *X-Men* storyboarding chores. "We don't try and storyboard the usual staccato effect. There's a lot more pages to our storyboards because we go through and detail the actions and the acting of the characters. We attempt to have the character convey what he is saying, even if you don't hear the dialogue. If the storyboard artists don't quite get it, then *I'll* add those touches when the boards come across my desk."

Storyboards, worked on by three artists over a three-week period, are then passed back to individual episode directors who break down each scene and, according to Houston, "choreograph each episode and action right down to the frame." The finished boards are then shipped overseas to animation studios (the first two seasons' work was animated in Korea, while the current season's shows are being done by a number of different studios, including one in the Philippines). During the first two seasons, an unrealistic 18-week turnaround often had *X-Men* missing airdates. A more realistic 30- to 32-week turnaround now allows the animators more time to ply their trade. And, says Houston, they need every second.

"The animation is all hand-drawn. We have as many as six lead characters every episode, and—in terms of what they wear, how much line mileage there is to each character, and the amount of color, highlight, and shadow we incorporate—[the artists] have a lot more things to contend with. So, animating this show is a real challenge."

Editing it is no picnic either, according to Sharon Janis, who took over the chore at the beginning of the second season, while continuing to edit *The Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers*. Janis, who literally knew squat about the X-Men when she accepted the job, has been the recipient of a burst of technology with the advent of a non-linear edit system called Avid—in which all footage is digitized down to a computer's hard drive. This technology certainly helps, especially when faced with a difficult episode like one that Janis recently contended with.

"We were always looking to create the strongest story we could, while staying true to the comic book characters and their world. That wasn't always easy."
—Eric Lewald, head writer

"1,900 edits in 20 minutes of show," she exclaims. "That broke a record. It was a show from the new studio in the Philippines,"—the guys responsible for Lady Deathstrike's breasts—"and while the movements were very fluid, and their overall animation was very nice, they had problems with opticals [special effects which enhance the animation]. So, I added a lot of flashes and explosions, and just kind of cleaned things up."

Janis, a picky type who spends "about a week on each show," says that quality shows don't always end up in her hands. Occasionally, there are problems, and even the good shows require "a lot of fixing up."

"Movements are sometimes jerky or slow, or scenes don't hook up with another. Sometimes scenes don't end up looking the way they were storyboarded. A lot of times, the studios get a little lazy and use fewer cels to create a movement. We either make them redraw it, or we cut around it. Shots are sometimes speeded up or slowed down."

Janis's challenge in editing *X-Men* comes from the fact that she's often given a limited amount of footage to work with. "It's not like if I don't have a close-up I can go to a wide shot, because all the animation decisions have already been made."

She does, however, manage her own share of editing magic.

"We had a Savage Land episode where Sauron was hypnotizing Xavier and it just seemed to be moving too slow, so I spiced it up with all kinds of two-frame edits of shots of Mr. Sinister, Sauron's eyes, and all sorts of things. A lot of times, the action sequences are a little slow and we'll cut all over the place, or we'll spice things up by superimposing shots and creating different effects. And occasionally we'll get a situation like we had once where Beast jumped up, we cut to Morph fighting, and then we cut to Beast jumping down. My reaction was, 'Where was Beast all this time?'" she laughs.

The *X-Men* animated series debuted in 1992 with a series of one-shot specials, and its full run began in January '93. The critical response was good. The ratings were good. And the series showed signs of expanding beyond a core audience of X-Men aficionados.

"That's because you don't have to have been a long-time fan of the X-Men comic books to enjoy this show," adds Calamari. "We have a lot of flashbacks, and the individual characters are pretty well-defined. There are constant reminders of what has come previously, so people who know absolutely nothing about the X-Men Universe can jump into this show and get it all pretty quickly."

Already fully into the third season, whose episodes will air well into 1995, Houston is waving the flag for doing things differently.

"We're definitely taking some chances," he declares. "In terms of stories, we're pushing the envelope and [making] things entertaining."

Echoes Lewald, "We had what amounts to a break between the

"We're definitely taking some chances. In terms of stories, we're pushing the envelope and making things entertaining." —Larry Houston, producer/director

second and third season, and so we decided to take some time and see if there were some major stories that the fans would really enjoy, and see if we could make some big events out of them."

Breaking with the loose-comic-book-adaptations edict of the first two seasons, season three offers up two multi-episode mini-series: a five-part adaptation of the "Phoenix Saga," where Jean Grey seemingly transforms into a cosmic force (which took place in the comics throughout *Uncanny X-Men* #101-#128), and a four-part interpretation of the tragic "Dark Phoenix Saga" (which originally ran in *Uncanny X-Men* #129-#138).

The Phoenix Saga aired as a Monday-through-Friday event this past fall, and was rerun on Saturday mornings starting in October.

"'The Dark Phoenix Saga' was pretty literal, but Marvel—in the comic book—took the Phoenix series in a lot of different directions, so there was a little more patching together involved on our part in that one. The comic took that series in three or four different directions, and so we had to figure out how to make it simpler. I understand why they [did] it in the books, but we couldn't keep it quite that convoluted for television, and still keep the audience."

A Houston favorite of this season centers on Nightcrawler, who, once his look was approved, was promptly plopped down into a controversial episode. "It's an episode that highlights Nightcrawler's religiousness," explains the producer/director. "We find him in a monastery in a remote village where the local villagers are having a problem with the fact that he's in a church, but looks like the devil. Initially, we were going to make a point in the episode that Nightcrawler was a Catholic, but we decided to avoid even more controversy with the character, by not referring to a specific religion."

Other third season shows on the horizon will feature the exploits of Archangel, Longshot, and Apocalypse. An Iceman story is in the works, as are ones for the Savage Land, and Corsair and Cyclops. Also being touted for possible appearances are shows featuring Eric the Red, Bishop, and Colossus. But at the center of things, assures Calamari, Wolverine, Xavier, Gambit, Rogue, and Storm will continue to be fan favorites.

And with the third and—pending a deal for a fourth season—final season in full swing, Lewald insists that the writing challenge remains constant.

"This is easily the most difficult show I've been involved with. There's so much to deal with. You have a 30-year X-Men legacy to keep up [with]. You're always faced with the question of 'Is this really an X-Men story?' There's so much detail. You have to be realistic in terms of what their powers do and what their characters are about. There's just so much to juggle. Writers on this show will invariably come in with a good story, and I'll have to spend a lot of time fixing the details to keep the show consistent with the comic books.

"Our modus operandi continues to be more character-oriented than anything else," he continues. "Beyond character and coming up with a really interesting story, everything else is pretty much wide open."

The *X-Men* animated series crew has been working essentially non-stop for the past three years, and the potential for burnout is a very real threat. While producer Houston concedes that "a lot of people are ready for some time off," he does not see writers and animators dropping dead in the aisles.

"It is possible that we'll reach a point with all this where we've had X-Men up to here, and we'll throw up our hands and scream, 'No more mutants!' Most producers will tell you that once you start dreaming about what you're doing, then it's time to leave.

"Well, I'm not dreaming about *X-Men* yet." ☆

Marc Shapiro, a freelance writer based in Pasadena, California, was 10 years old when Glenn Danzig was born; he's now halfway to the grave.

Two of the more violent animated characters on TV, Wolverine and Sabretooth are also two of the most popular.

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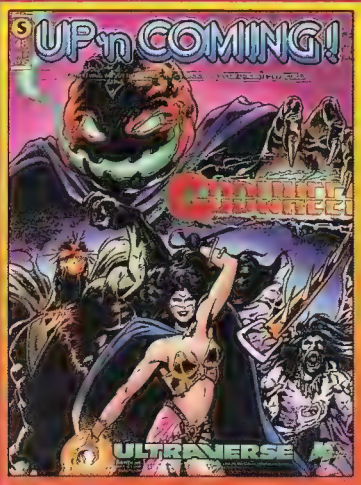

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No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Capcom, their immediate families, and anyone who thought that the code-breaking sequence in *Stargate* was awesome. C'mon, that was like the lamest thing I ever saw in my life! Print your name, address, city, state, zip code, date of birth, telephone number with area code, and Apocalypse code on the official entry form, a three-by-five-inch index card, or a standard postcard. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry to Mutant Apocalypse Contest, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064. No mechanical reproductions will be accepted. All entries become the property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state, and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes are offered. The prizes will be awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated, or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purpose and rules hereof. Ya know, the first time I heard Apocalypse on the X-Men cartoon, I thought his name was "A pack o' lips." For days I thoughtlessly wondered, "What kind of stupid name is that for a villain?" **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by February 24, 1995.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. The prize winners will be selected in a random drawing from all properly completed entry forms received at contest headquarters. The random drawing will be conducted on February 27, 1995 by Wizard Press.

For a list of winners, available after March 17, 1995, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Mutant Apocalypse Winners, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064, or just keep watching *Wizard*!

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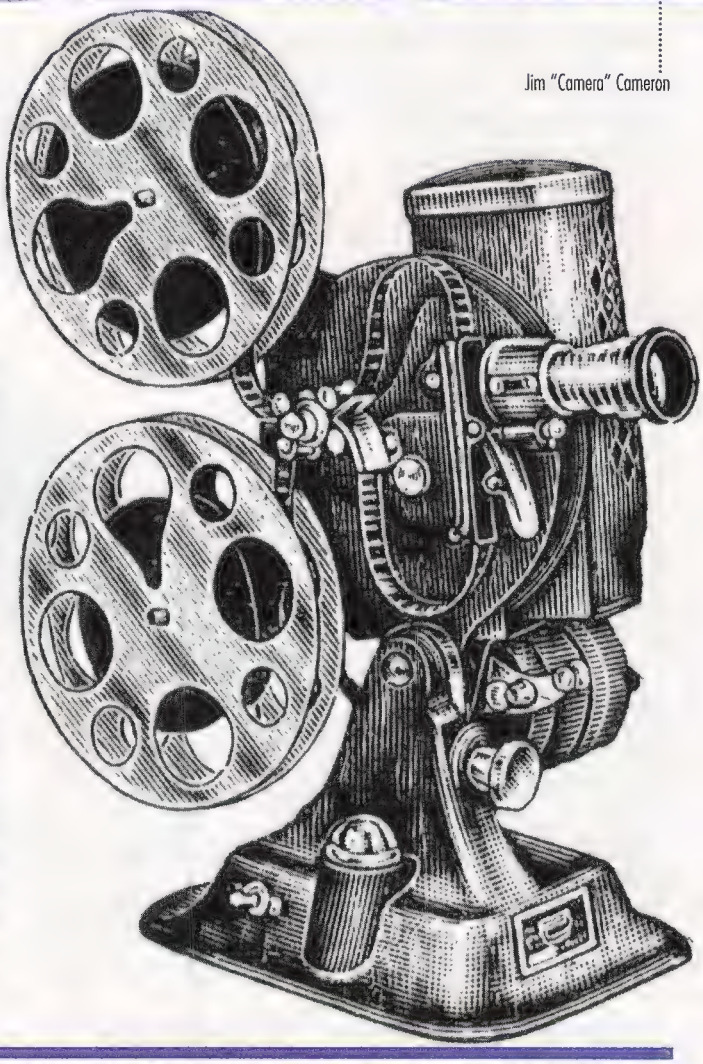
Wizard casts the X-Men movie.

Casting call

Jim "Camera" Cameron

We've all been hearing about the supposed X-Men movie for years now. Heck, it was first mentioned waaaay back in the letters page of *Uncanny X-Men* #158. And most of what we've been hearing is delays this, and delays that, keeping this mouth-watering project trapped somewhere in movieland limbo.

But fret no longer! Fed up with what must be miles and miles of red tape from Hollywood weasels (and, yes, *everyone* in Hollywood is a weasel), we're makin' our own damn movie! (Well, actually, we're just writing down a bunch of ideas, showing pretty pictures, and playin' make-believe, but that's gotta be better than nothing.) So here we go. First off, writing *and* directing the big event: James Cameron (that *Aliens*, *Terminator*, and *T2* fella). The film, of course, would have a mother lode of special effects, courtesy of ILM (Industrial Light and Magic), and would star a veritable who's who in the entertainment biz. Who, exactly? Just lean back in your seat, dig into that bottomless tub o' popcorn, and grab onto your honey...it's showtime!



BY A BUNCH OF *WIZARD* STAFFERS

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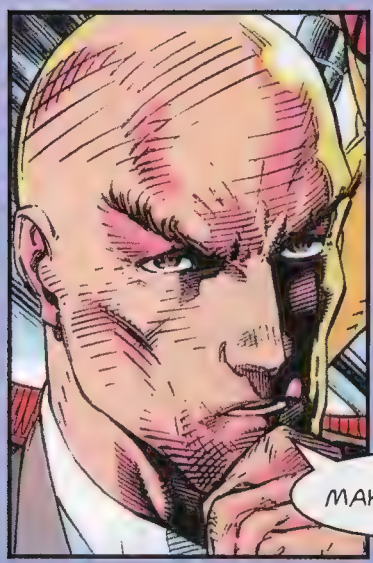
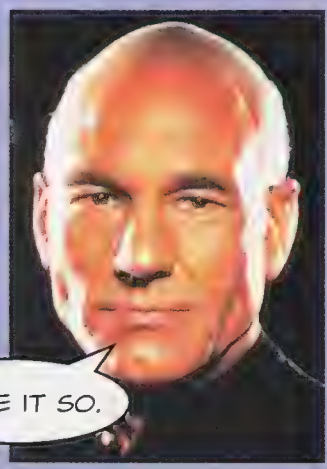
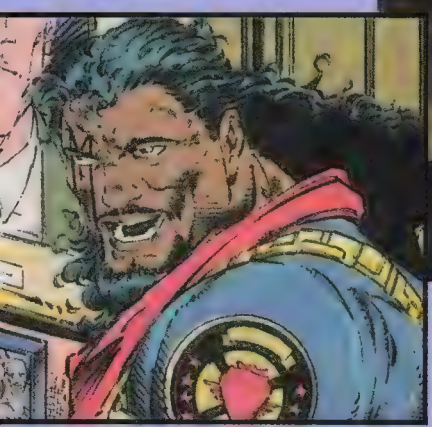


As far as the X-Men go, we'd have an eight-hero team, comprised of the coolest members ever to wear one o' them stylin' "X" belt buckles. Leading the team would be **Professor X**, played by Patrick Stewart, best known for his portrayal of Captain Jean-Luc Picard on TV's *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. As far as who would play the X-Men themselves...



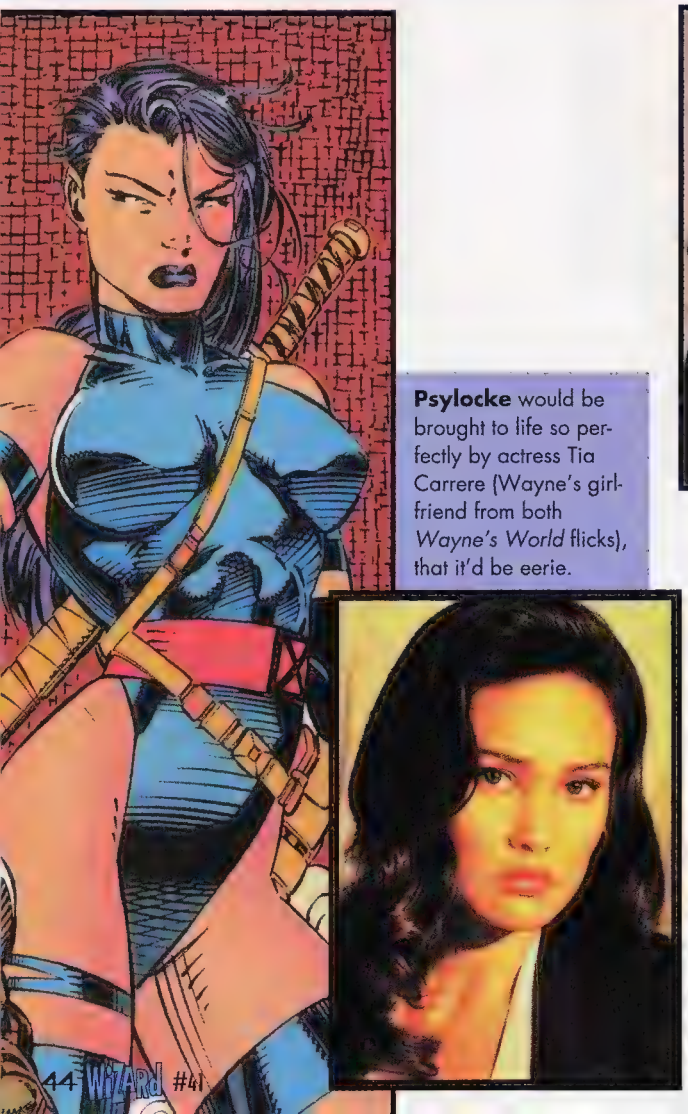
Bishop would be played by Michael Dorn (who has an excellent, deep, "I'm gonna kick your ass!"-kinda voice), known for his portrayal of Lt. Worf from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.



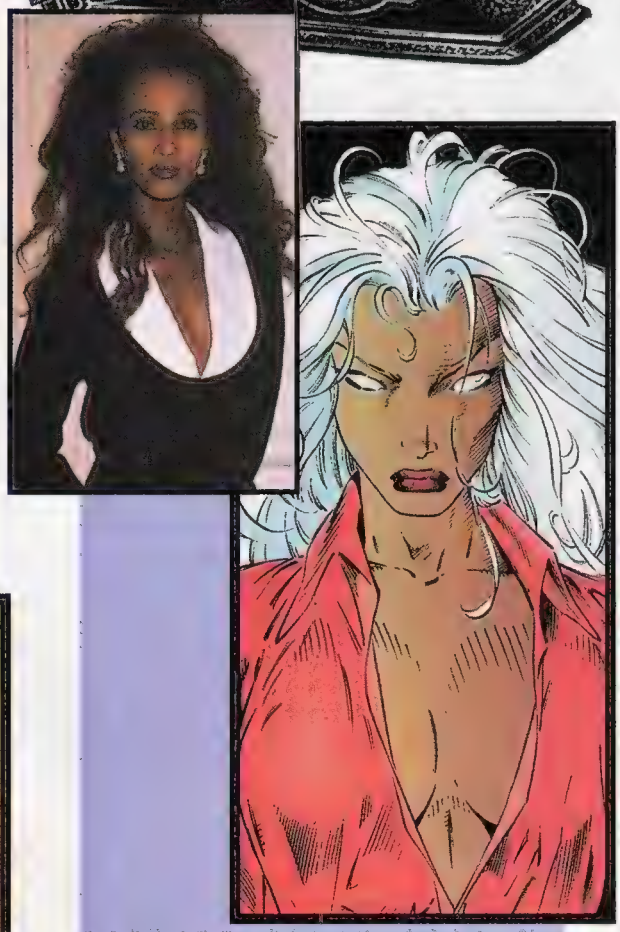
Pre-nutso **Colossus** would be played by tough guy Dolph Lundgren, who's best remembered for slappin' around Rocky in *Rocky IV* as the Russian 'roid-head Ivan Drago.

Field leader **Cyclops** is the spitting image of Michael Biehn, best known as Kyle Reese, the hero from the first *Terminator* flick, and Corporal Hicks from *Aliens*.

Gambit, the ragin' Cajun lady-killer, is perfect for box office big-shot Jean-Claude Van Damme, who could execute all of Remy's flashy kicks, acrobatics, and accent. This would also mean we get the obligatory Van Damme butt-shot, which he proudly presents in all of his movies.

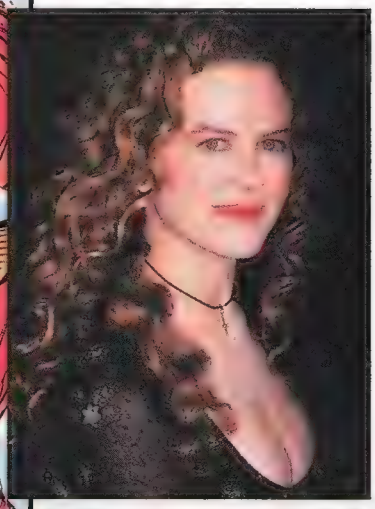


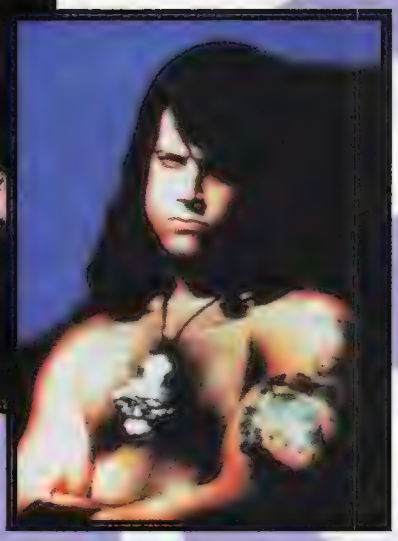
Psylocke would be brought to life so perfectly by actress Tia Carrere (Wayne's girlfriend from both *Wayne's World* flicks), that it'd be eerie.



Storm would be portrayed by actress/Mrs. David Bowie/supermodel Iman. *¡Muy caliente!*

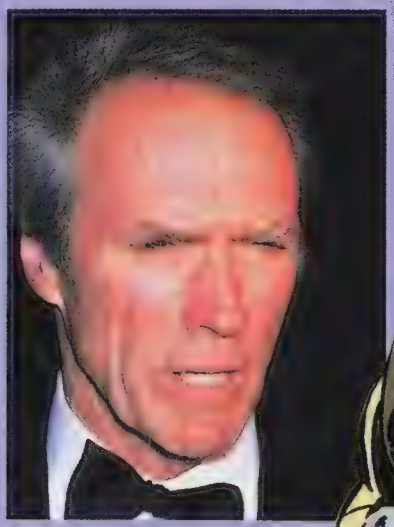
The codename-less **Jean Grey** would be played by mega-babe Nicole Kidman (wrrrrrowwww), best known for her role as Tom Cruise's main squeeze in *Far and Away*, and the Dark Knight's next love interest in *Batman Forever*.





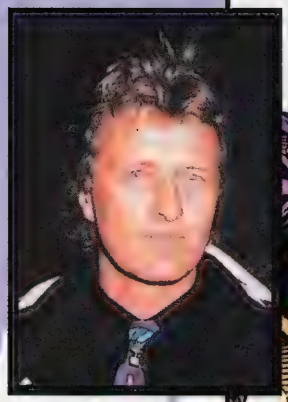
And finally, **Wolverine**, the most unshaven hero in comics, would be brought to life by brooding rock star Glenn Danzig.

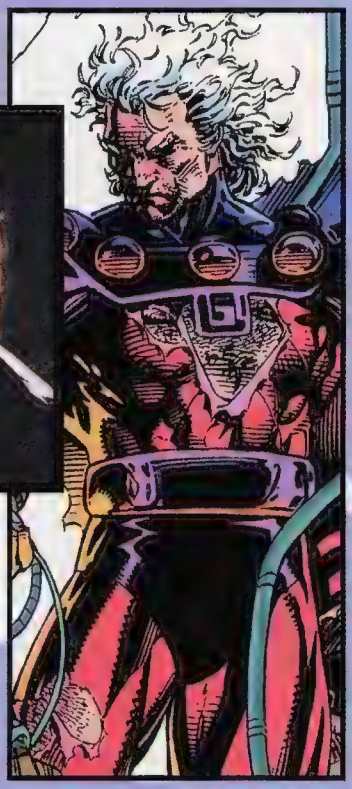
But wait, there's more. Our team would also be paid a visit by a certain time-traveling, battle-scarred, tough-as-nails warrior! Yup, **Cable** would have a supporting role, played by King of the Tough Guys, Clint Eastwood. ("Go ahead, clone me. Make my day..." Boy, that'd be cool.)



And, since this action movie needs action, we've also slapped together our own version of the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants. Though they've only got four members, this team would just kick ass:

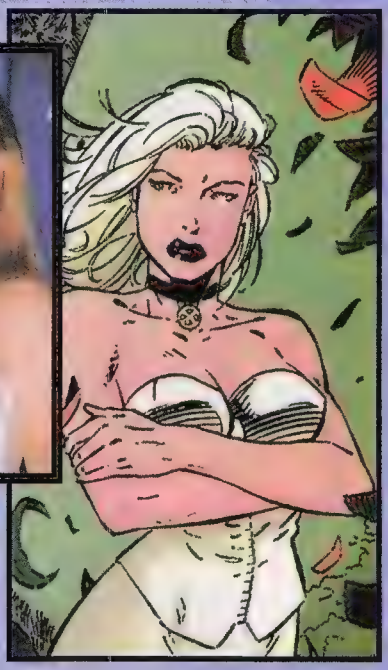
The savage **Sabretooth** comes to life courtesy of Clancy Brown, who's best known as the Kurgen from the first (and only good) *Highlander* flick, as well as the sheriff from *Pet Sematary II*.





Magneto, the leader of this unpleasant group, would be played by Rutger Hauer, best known for his role as the head looney replicant, Roy Batty, from *Blade Runner*.

The **White Queen** would be filled-out (ba-da-bump) by Rebecca de Mornay, the femme fatale best known as the unhinged nanny from *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle*.



And rounding out our fun-loving group, the unstoppable **Juggernaut** would be played to a "T" by pro-wrestler (and quite the angry-looking man) Vader.

Now *that's* a flick I wouldn't mind payin' seven bucks to see! But will a movie starring Marvel's merry mutants ever be made, and even more importantly, will it be cool? Beats the hell out of us, but it sure was fun slapping this thing together. (Now, if only some open-minded bigwig at 20th Century Fox were to read this...) ☆

When not listening to the voices that command them to kill and feast, the Wizard Bullpen is made up of a whole bunch of die-hard comic fans that talk about fanboyish comic crap all day long.

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Wolverine: Adamantium Rage Contest
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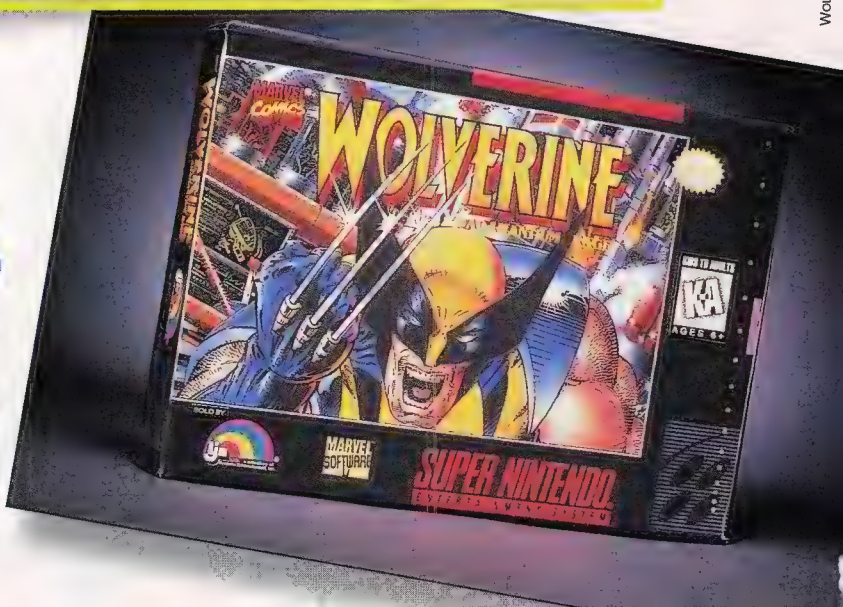

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Legal Stuff

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Acclaim Entertainment, their immediate families, and anybody who says video games rot your brain. Hey, YOU go read a book, buddy! Print your name, address, city, state, zip code, date of birth, telephone number with area code, and the answers to the unnamed villain questions on the official entry form, a three-by-five-inch index card, or a standard postcard. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry to Wolverine Adamantium Rage Contest, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064. No mechanical reproductions will be accepted. All entries become the property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state, and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes are offered. The prizes will be awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated, or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purpose and rules hereof. If Wolverine is the best there is at what he does, why does he need a healing factor? **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by February 24, 1995.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. The prize winners will be selected in a random drawing from all properly completed entry forms received at contest headquarters. The random drawing will be conducted on February 27, 1995 by Wizard Press.

For a list of winners, available after March 17, 1995, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Wolverine: Adamantium Rage Winners, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064, or just keep watching *Wizard*!

Official Wolverine: Adamantium Rage Entry Form

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CITY STATE ZIP

DATE OF BIRTH

PHONE (DON'T FORGET YOUR AREA CODE)

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VILLAIN #2:

VILLAIN #3:

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VILLAIN #6:

VILLAIN #7:

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It's in the cards

A handful of artists from this year's upcoming Fleer Ultra X-Men set talk about style, painting spandex, and executives in suits who don't know anything.

For a bunch of mutant freaks in flashy costumes, the X-Men have never been ones to hide from the spotlight. With last year's X-Men '94 set, Fleer gave Marvel's X-Men a set above the rest. This December, the company outdoes itself again, with the release of Ultra X-Men '95, a 150-card team-oriented set, featuring gold-foil stamping, UV coating, and six-color printing on every card.

Basic characters, heroes, and villains alike make up some 54 cards, each with the Ultra X-Men logo and character's name gold-foil-stamped on the front, and a brief character description on the back. The 65 team cards center on 10 distinct teams: Alpha Flight, the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, Excalibur, Generation X, the Mutant Liberation Front, Original Team, X-Men Blue Team, X-Men Gold Team, X-Factor, and X-Force. If you thought the name "X-Men" simply referred to a group of five funky mutants, you're sadly mistaken! The backs of these team cards are slightly different, in that they contain information given in a first-person narrative spoken by the team's leader.

And would any card set in today's market be complete without its fair share of subsets and chase cards? X-Overs, Greatest Battles, and Spring Break—which showcases those lovable mutants at a beach party—make up Ultra X-Men '95's subsets. Chase sets include a 10-card suspended animation set, a nine-card Power Blast etched-foil Hunters and Stalkers set, and Fleer's first-ever chromium set with the 10-card Sinister Observations.

Greg and Tim Hildebrandt, renowned for their Marvel Masterpieces work, have also plied their artistic talents on a number of cards in this year's Ultra X-Men. Their contribution includes the X-Over subset and a few of the Greatest Battles cards. After completing more than 150 paintings for the

BY ANDREW KARDON

Masterpieces set, you'd think it would be a breeze for the twin artists to paint a mere handful of cards, but the Hildebrandts faced some real artistic challenges.

"There's two figures in them, and we're just used to the one figure," says Greg. "With that big set that we did for Marvel, there were single figures in them, and here there were a lot of close-ups. This was like a minimum of two figures interacting, and there were quite a few horizontal [paintings]. For [the Marvel Masterpieces] set we just completed, they were 95% vertical compositions."

They may have painted enough Marvel characters by now to earn them a strong reputation within the industry, but the two brothers are relatively new to the comic card scene. According to Greg, they've only been at it for about a year now.

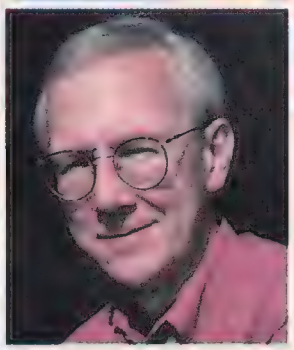
"We just got started in this. We've illustrated for years, but this is all brand-new, so it's like a whole new world. It's really exciting. I can't see why most mainstream illustrators wouldn't want to do this kind of stuff, because it affords so much variety—the images are more explosive and imaginative. It's great to do."

The artists, who share credit for their work, split up the chores quite fairly, varying the work back and forth between them. "One of us might do the layout, the sketching, the thumbnailing, [and] putting it up initially," says Greg. "The other guy may not do that, and just go ahead and start to paint it. And that jumps around. So generally, at the painting stage, we both are working on the same image, switching it back and forth."

As far as what they did for the '95 Ultra X-Men product, Greg can't cite any one card as his favorite, saying that as an artist, his favorite work is always the most current piece that he's working on. Tim, on the other hand, is able to narrow it down to the Greatest Battles card with Wolverine vs. Cyber.

"I like the [card with] Wolverine rolling down the cliff with Cyber," Tim says. "That one just jumps into my mind. I like the colors and the lighting. They're up in the mountains, and it's like low sunlight, and it has very exaggerated purple shadows. I like the color scheme."

The Brothers Hildebrandt collaborated on this dramatic painting of Wolverine locked in battle with his nemesis Cyber. Tim prefers Schick, while Greg goes for the natural look.



Being big fans of Adam and Andy Kubert, artists on *Wolverine* and *X-Men* respectively, the Hildebrandts keep up with all the current X-Men titles. As far as particular characters go, Greg says that Wolverine and Rogue are probably his favorites. "I would probably agree with that," says Tim. "See, we're twins, and we have to agree."

Another artist team, who agree on a great many things, is fantasy artist Boris Vallejo and his wife, artist Julie Bell. The couple painted the Sinister Observations subset—which features Mr. Sinister secretly observing our favorite mutants in the Danger Room—along with a number of other cards for the set. Unlike the Hildebrandts, they never worked on the same card together, splitting up the assignment instead.

"We don't work on the same pieces, but we work in the same studio side to side," says Vallejo. "Very often it's really funny, because we don't look at each other's paintings. We have the easels side to side, and we talk all day long, and listen to music. But we don't look at each other's paintings until the painting is really far into production. So, sometimes it's like, 'Surprise, there it is.' [The Ultra X-Men set] was really interesting—especially when we had to do the same character [on two different cards]—to check with each other after the painting was finished, and see what we each had done with that particular character."

Bell, who has only been painting seriously for four years, says a lot of comparisons in style between the two of them went on throughout the project. "This is one situation where we've been doing a lot of that. We've been thinking, 'What are the differences?'" she says. "I learned how to paint from Boris, so it's definitely going to be very similar. Besides that, we really think very much alike. We like the same kinds of things. I like to see the same kind of elements in my paintings that he likes to see, but I'm just now starting to be able to see specific things that are different."

Bell cites her portrayal of female figures, for obvious reasons, as one of those differences. "It sounds kind of too easy to say," she says, "but my paintings are just more feminine. When Boris does the male characters, I feel like they have a more masculine look—not that mine look feminine and his female characters look masculine."

Bell, chosen for her striking depictions of action-oriented and quite sensual female characters, handled many of the female characters in the Fleer set. This was much like a second childhood for the artist.

Julie Bell contributed to the set in different ways; she painted female characters such as Domino (opposite), and also modeled for her rendition of Storm.

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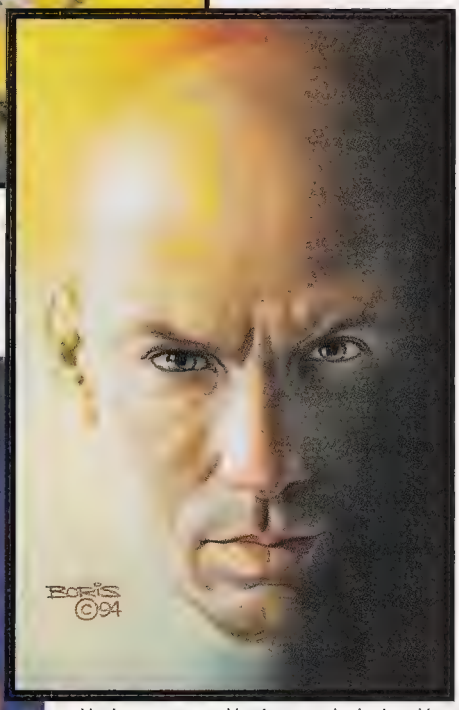


Renowned fantasy artist Boris Vallejo chipped in many a card for the set: Professor X (right), Storm (above), and many others. Also check out this month's poster, a Bishop shot by Boris.

"I really love dance and that kind of thing," says Bell, "and the female characters, even though they're [geared toward] action, really kind of relate to the feeling of dance, so that's really fun for me. When I was a kid, I always used to love to draw figures with different costumes on; it's kind of like playing with your Barbie dolls. When I'm painting these characters, I'm thinking, 'I wish I had boots like this.' It's kind of like my fantasy's there—the kind of outfits I want.

"The thing about the superheroes that I really love," says Bell, "is that basically what you're painting are figures with painted skins, and I really love to paint figures, and so does Boris. This is what was really so appealing to him, too. [Fleer's] not real concerned with a lot of stuff in the background. The kind of things that we get to paint are what we really love—which is the figure, mostly—and then, with the action and the costumes, make all these really bright colors."

Vallejo, much like his wife, enjoys painting the female characters. "I like to [paint] the women more than the men, so I enjoy the female characters more," he says. "But of all those, I would probably say that my favorite character is Storm. I think that she has guts. I like her costume. I like the way she looks. I like the way that she has this dark look to her. It's a very [pretty] character for me."

Bell herself modeled for her painting of the windrider, because she loves the character and her costume. "A lot of the elements of the costume [are there] just to emphasize the figure," she says. "The more you get into working with the superheroes—the lines that go around the figure—[you realize] it's all there to make the figure more exciting. When you're painting, you can kind of work with that and use that to your advantage. I really liked doing the Wolverine also, because I used Boris as my model for that one. That was really fun. Wolverine's kind of hammy. Boris, too," she laughs.

Vallejo, best known for his fantasy art adorning yearly calendars, found the Ultra X-Men set a true pleasure to work on. As is the case with a number of artists who contributed to the series, he credits the tremendous amount of artistic freedom as the main source for enjoyment.

"The [freedom] was something that was really, really nice, because [Fleer said], 'Just do whatever you want to do.' They wanted to see sketches, of course, before I went into the finished painting, but it was pretty much up to us. Even when they had questions about the sketches that we did, it was really up to us to say, 'Well, we still want to do it that way.' So, we really had a lot of freedom with that. It was really great."

Freedom, however, has been known to come at a price. Artist Ray Lago agrees that Fleer was quite open to ideas, but finds it hard to be very creative when dealing in such a small medium. "As far as what kind of picture to do, it's fairly free," says Lago, "but there's not too much you can do in a thing that's gonna print very small. You also have to take into account where the type is going; in this case, there's borders running along the bottom. There's nothing running along the top, which is good, because that gives you a little more room. I've found that you can make a really pretty picture with characters in the distance, but [for] the kind of impact that Fleer's looking for, you have to get a little closer up.

"Almost all the characters I did, except for the battle cards, are virtually full-figured shots, but I made sure that it was figures that are coming right out at you, so that you might be losing some feet in the picture or something, just to get them a little closer to you. They have a little bit of an angle; I lean them forward, that kind of thing, just to give them a little more impact. Fleer's especially into that. I mean, well, Fleer produces like baseball cards and stuff, so they were into good beauty shots of the characters. They don't really want to have a picture of Cyclops sitting, having a picnic somewhere in the distance under a tree."

Lago, who calls himself a "bit of a realist painter," admits to trouble with colors, at least where trading cards are concerned. "One thing I find when I do trading cards, is that my color seems to go 'shwooo'—way off the scale. Generally I like muted, duller colors. When I start painting guys in tights, the colors just get really bright and I have to stop myself, because I know I'm painting spandex, but it doesn't always have to be quite that bright—they're not always out in bright sunlight."

Tom Taggart, known for his bizarre, sculptured covers—on *Doom Patrol* and *Animal Man*, to name a few—has always done work that sets him apart from the crowd. His two-

card contribution to this set, featuring Albert (Wolverine's companion) and Prior Turrin, is no exception. The only real concern, according to Taggart, was in discovering exactly who Prior Turrin was.

"To tell you the truth, I didn't know much about him—no one knew, when they gave me the assignment. I was looking around for a reference on this guy—no one could get me any," he says. "Then I finally get the book that he's in [*The Adventures of Cyclops & Phoenix* mini-series], and he looks different in every panel. He's some guy who has no body. Probably one of the weirder characters I've ever had to sculpt."

Taggart sculpted Turrin using Super Sculpy™ and a car vacuum cleaner, and then the sculpture was photographed. While he's happy with his results, the finished card leaves the artist somewhat discouraged. "The funny thing about him is that I spent like half a week on his little vehicle alone, just building the little thing that he floats around in," he says. "In the finished cards, they crop right in on the figure part of it. That's part of the business, I guess. No matter what you're gonna do, someone, somewhere, who has a suit, who doesn't know anything, is gonna be telling you, 'Well, just crop down on his head.'"

This Ray Lago Cyclops painting (below) almost made it onto the cover of *Wizard* #41, but was edged out at the last second by Marc Sasso's Cyclops. Don't worry, Lago fans, we used a Lago-painted Gambit as one of this month's covers.

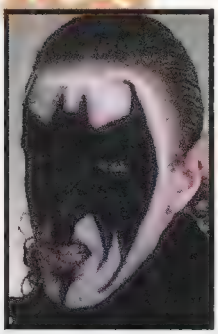
At first, Taggart didn't think Prior Turrin would be the type of character he'd normally want to work on, but by the end he was quite happy with his creation. Taggart feels he was assigned Turrin because he's known as an artist who is "always being put in this weird category of 'he'll do robots and that's it.'" For that very reason, Taggart would like to take a crack at some unusually normal-looking characters.

"Rogue is one character I would like to do, because who would think I'd do it? Typically, everybody'd be coming to me and saying, 'You should be doing Colossus,' and yeah, I'd love to do Colossus. I'd also like to do Nightcrawler. The one villain that I'm just dying to do is Mojo. I'm trying to get him in there somewhere. After doing Prior Turrin, he's right in the same category—a weird thing with machine legs."

Perhaps the most interesting chase set in Ultra X-Men '95 is the plastic suspended animation set, illustrated by Gary Ciccarelli. The unique thing about this subset is that four of the cards—Magneto, Storm, Wolverine, and Beast—show the front and back of each character.

"That presented a problem that had to be solved," says Ciccarelli. "They had to work from the front *and* the back, which got into a lot of penciling and drawing. That took a lot of time then—the actual artwork itself—just making both sides work visually. The Wolverine one, I must've [drawn] him I don't know how many times. Finally, we came up with a way of doing him where he's lunging at you and his feet are almost up behind him, so you don't really see them. Then I can make them large, when I swap [sides]. It was [difficult]."

Dave DeVries chose this Omega Red card (above) as his favorite of his many contributions to the set.



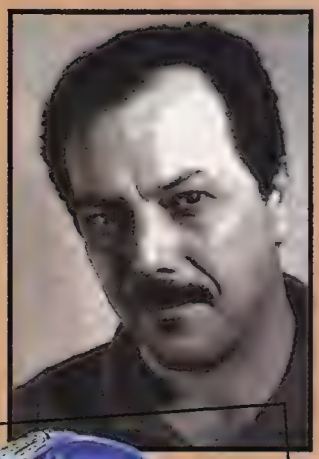
The artist didn't have as much trouble painting Magneto, since "he was standing up straight." According to Ciccarelli, the hardest cards to draw for such a suspended animation set are the ones where perspective is involved, and the character itself lunges right at you. When the cards are reversed, so is the perspective—feet that were once small now have to be huge. To make matters even more difficult, the paintings have to match identically on both sides.

Another artist known for his perspective and patience with detail is Dave DeVries. DeVries, who illustrated the Hunters and Stalkers set, is most proud of his Omega Red common card. "What I've tried to do with these cards is [construct them with] a lot of very way-out angles—lots of extreme foreshortening. I enjoy looking at stuff that's like that, that style of art. I mean, obviously Jack Kirby did it that way.

"Omega Red's got that foreshortening in the cables. I made the cables shooting upright. If you were lying on the ground and he was standing above you and he shoots his cables out of his arms, he shoots like right over your face. That's basically the angle. The thing which I also wanted to get with him is that you can see his cables through his skin and his forearms, so it looks kind of gross. That's

Sculptor/spooky-guy Tom Taggart (above) contributed two three-dimensional pieces to the set: Albert (above left), and Prior Turrin (left).

Gary Ciccarelli illustrated the "suspended animation" chase set. These cards have silhouettes printed on clear plastic, and when you flip some of them over, you get a rear view of the character on the front. Kinda cool.



just one of those things I like. Wolverine should have that, too."

DeVries, who doesn't currently read any X-Men comics, used to read about the mutants. "I'm hoping that Marvel will finally put me on their comp list. If they send it to me, I'll read it. I just can't afford it."

His other gripe with Marvel concerns a long-dead, though recently somewhat resurrected, character: Warlock of the long-canceled *New Mutants*. DeVries says he would love to paint the character, "but I get a lot of garbage from Marvel, like 'He's dead!' He's a great character. He's great visually. You can really turn him into anything."

Every artist from Fleer's Ultra X-Men '95 may have a different style as well as a different love for each character, but the enthusiasm for their work is most definitely apparent in the final product. Boris Vallejo, among others, had such a great time working on the set that he can't wait to do more.

"It has been a really nice experience, because I've been away from doing things from comics for such a long time, and it was strange, really, because for years I didn't read comics. I hadn't been into comics for years, and all of a sudden about five years ago, I realized what was going on with the new breed of comic books and I was amazed. So, it was really nice to get into this and be part of it. It was a very great experience for me." ☆

Andrew Kardon, a Copy Editor best described as cagey, enjoys rockin' to the beat of Twisted Sister and readin' issues of Cap featuring his "great new headgear."

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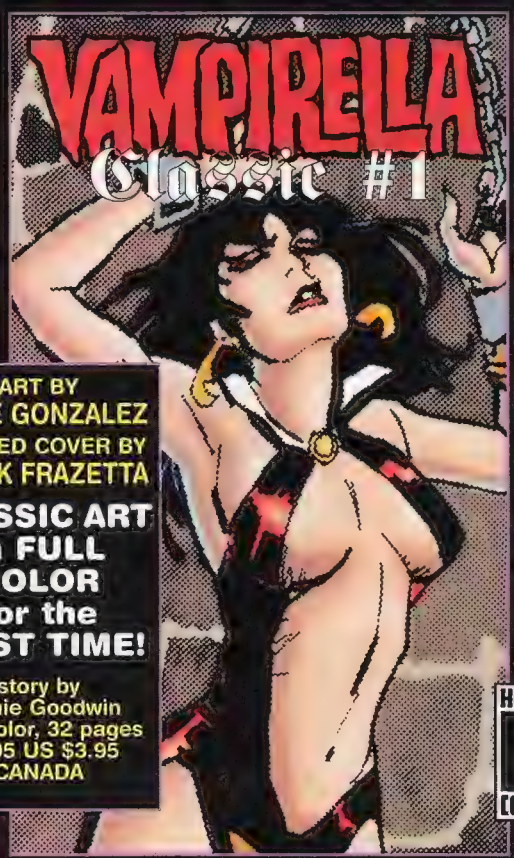

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The Ultimate Comic Book

Stress Test

By John Seals

Which are better—old comics or modern ones? The debate is finally put to rest.

IF YOU'RE ANY KIND OF COMIC GEEK AT ALL—and you probably are if you're reading *Wizard*—then you must have heard of the age-old debate comparing today's die-cut, shrink-wrapped, hologram-enhanced, buy-six-issues-and-lock-them-up-and-never-read-them mags to the time-honored, classic funny books of the past.

Invariably, the discussion centers around things like the quality of artwork, the well-crafted plots, and highly imaginative yarns spun by masters of the comic book art. Who was a better artist: Jack Kirby or Todd McFarlane? Is Peter David as good a scripter as, say, Stan Lee?

Today's comics are printed on high-quality paper with high-tech computerized colorization and top-notch printing. The comics *I* grew up reading were shipped on cheap paper with flimsy covers that began to disintegrate almost as soon as you started reading them. (That's right, *reading* them.)

I guess people who compare comics in the above ways seem to have a larger group of sane moments in their days than I do. You see, when I want to compare one comic to another, I can think of a whole different bunch of crazy measurements.

So, after some careful consideration, and the blessing of the wonderfully weird *Wizard* staff, I plan to put an end to the debate of which era's comics are better—with the *Wizard* Comic Book Stress Test!

I limited the entrants to 10 samples each, from both the current batch of comics and those from yesteryear. I would have loved to include a bunch of Golden Age mags, but the darn market for even a totally hatched book from the '40s precludes a poor writer like me from getting his greasy mitts on one.

After choosing my unwilling subjects, I came up with 10 means of punishment to figure out which books had the moxie to handle the strangest stress test to come down the pike since the last time a mailman packed an Uzi in his lunch box—so put down that Hostess™ snack product and read on. The *Wizard* Comic Book Stress Test has begun!

ALL TITLES AND CHARACTERS SHOWN ARE ™ & © THEIR RESPECTIVE OWNERS.

A COUPLE OF GOOD COMICS AND A WORKING TOILET. NOW *THAT'S* A LITTLE SLICE OF HEAVEN.

PHOTOS BY Kathleen Smith

STRESS SiT TEST

"Fetch!"

TEST 1: I'll toss one of each type of comic a few yards and see which one my malamute dog, Zach, fetches. Suitable comics are Todd McFarlane's *Spawn* and Marvel's hopelessly bad *Rom: Spaceknight.*

IT seems that my dog Zach has a fondness for absolutely anything made out of paper. Grocery sacks, paper towels, Taco Bell™ burrito wrappers. You name it—he's eaten it. Yes—and I know this will shock some of you out there—he's even eaten a comic book or 12 that I've left lying around. Oddly enough, he seems to prefer older comics to the more modern ones. Maybe he cut his lip on a hologram once or something.

In this test, I rolled up and secured each comic with a rubber band, giving the comic the appearance—to the untrained canine eye—of a simple stick. Then I tossed each of them and tracked the results.

Zach was more than ready, and fetched back Al Simmons's alter ego in a flash. But immediately the test hit an unforeseen snag. The stubborn beast would not release the comic. That's right, in a fit of four-legged pride, he staged a doggie uprising right there in my own backyard.

I managed to get one hand wrapped tightly around the end of the mag that made Mac Toddy richer, only to see Zach chomp down even harder. Finally, after a few minutes of wrestling—and threatening to take away his Milk-Bone™ privileges—I managed to wrest the book from the rebellious animal's powerful jaws.

The comic didn't fare all that well. The cover came out looking a lot like Al Simmons's face, which is to say, not very appealing. Nonetheless, the comic remained in readable shape—if you don't mind the fact that teeth marks are liberally distributed throughout the pages. But I never READ *Spawn* anyway. I just look at the pictures.

Somebody once said that those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it. Well, after tossing the *Rom* comic out into the yard, I'll be sure to vouch for that little cliché. No sooner had Zach picked it up that he decided he wanted to add this comic to his collection as well.

Another five-minute bout of "Zaaach, giiiive!" resulted in a second torn and mangled comic. *Rom* fared much worse than *Spawn* against Zach's slashing incisors. The cover is now almost completely gone and parts of several inside pages are missing, making it hard to read the book. But, to be brutally honest, I probably wouldn't have wasted the time reading that comic either.

Overall, *Spawn* was declared the winner in this case. The higher-quality paper stock—and maybe Todd's brilliant artwork—came together to ensure victory.

"Flame On!"

TEST 2: I'll start a fire with some comics and see how they burn. We'll compare today's Human Torch to yesterday's Johnny Storm.

HOW DO YOU LIKE YOUR MARVELS? WELL DONE?

BEFORE I proceed with the details of the next test, I want to stress that readers who may wish to duplicate these particular feats shouldn't. (And you should probably see a counselor, 'cause it means you've got your priorities at least as screwed up as mine—and brother, that ain't good.)

Contrary to what you may have read in other magazines, comics are great for starting fires. Whenever I go camping, I make sure to bring along a box of 1960s Dell comics or early '70s Charltons. The dry and brittle paper will quickly light up and take the chill off of even the most frigid mornings.

Choosing comics for this test was simple. When I think of fire, I think of the Human Torch. And what better way to compare today's comics to yesterday's than by comparing John Storm to John Storm?

My old-time comic was a less-than-pristine copy of *Marvel Team-Up* featuring everybody's favorite wall-crawler and the aforementioned Mr. Storm. For a comic of more recent vintage, I chose a new issue of *Fantastic Four.*

After preparing to light up the comics, I decided that those two magazines looked kind of lonely down there. Just to "brighten things up," I added copies of DC's *Demon* (current series), Dark Horse's *Madman Comics* #1, and Vertigo's *Sandman.*

Surprisingly, it took a long time to get these comics lit. After about a book-and-a-half of matches, I was about ready to call it quits, when ace photographer Kathleen Smith suggested a little lighter fluid. Whooosh! The whole thing went up faster than a convenience store in an L.A. riot.

As I could have predicted, the warm yellow flames had no preference between old comic or new. They burned up the old Johnny Storm book just as quickly as the new one. And despite having a plot that's harder to follow than a French road map, the modern-day *FF* fared no better. Maybe Marvel should try to print its comics on paper made out of those "unstable molecules" that Reed Richards makes the FF costumes out of.

The other three new comics just added fuel to the flame, and after about five minutes, not a single comic was in readable condition. I was forced to call this phase of the test a draw—and to cut my losses, I dragged out a sack of marshmallows before the fire burned out.

(Smokey the Bear says: Remember, only you can prevent comic fires. Only *you.*)

Magnus: Lawn Mower Fighter

TEST 3: I'll stick some comics in the ground and run them over with my old roommate's Lawn-Boy™. Features everybody's favorite robot fighter and, out of the ashes of the Old West, the Rawhide Kid!

"JOHN! GET YOUR ASS OUTSIDE AND MOW THE COMICS—THEY'RE PRACTICALLY UP TO MY KNEES!"

I hope this statement doesn't get me into too much hot water with the Valiant management, but I kind of wish that Magnus would have been one character the company left in the old Dell limbo. The idea of some guy in a tunic running around bashing a bunch of metal men on the noggin is about as believable as some kid getting bitten on the hand by a radioactive spider and...oh, well.

Lining up Magnus's old-time counterpart was a definitive pleasure. I chose one of my favorite all-time Marvel heroes, the Rawhide Kid. While it did cause me some small amount of pain to destroy such a cool Jack Kirby cover, it really didn't matter what happened to the rest of the comic, because I can tell you what happened without ever reading it. The same darn thing happened in nearly every issue of the *Kid*!

Anyway, in this test, I buried each of the comics halfway into the ground and ran them over with a lawn mower. I was doubtful if Magnus's robot-fighting powers, or the Kid's blazing twin Colt .45s, would stand much of a chance against the best that the Lawn-Boy™ corporation could throw against them.

The results were nothing if not spectacular—at least to my comics-addled brains. Both comics exploded the second they came into contact with the mower's spinning blades.

Surprisingly, the newer *Magnus* comic suffered the most damage at the hands of the mighty mower. The comic was virtually shredded into a rather useless lump of paper bits.

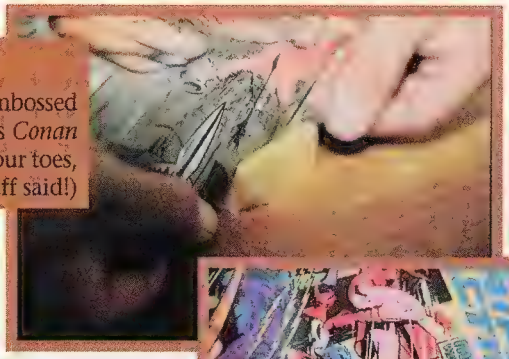
The *Rawhide Kid* fared much better, yet the comic was still chopped completely in half. I guess if you were patient enough, you could have pieced all of the pages of the book back together—like a big 12-cent jigsaw puzzle—and read the thing. But you would probably find this a waste of time. Besides, you can pick up a whole run of the *Kid* in the back issue bins of any decent comic shop for about eight cents.

It's my guess that the softer, more pliable paper that the Rawhide One's book is printed on was the reason for his book surviving the test in better condition, making this book a winner.

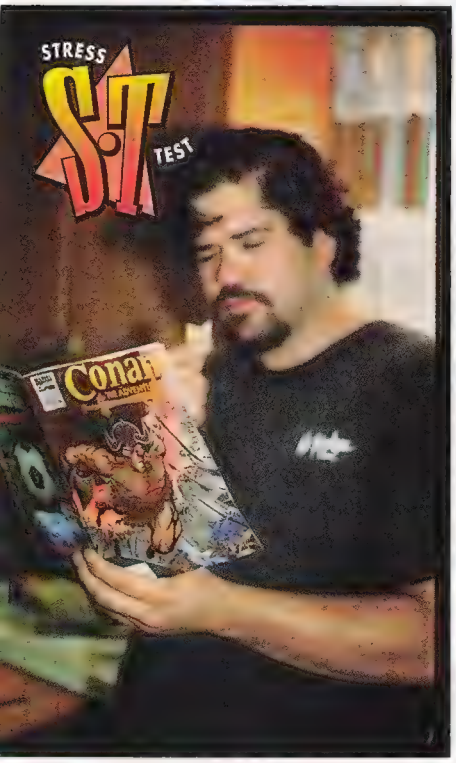
As the Kid himself would say: "Slap leather, ya varmint!"

The Better Cheddar

TEST 4: I'll try to slice a block of cheese with a foil-stamped, embossed comic of today, and a wilted, old Silver Age book. Features *Conan the Adventurer* #1 (omigosh—a #1!) and, just to keep you on your toes, Marvel's old Avengers reprint title, *Marvel Triple Action*. ('Nuff said!)



AS many of my acquaintances can attest, I like cheese. I probably like cheese even more than I like comics (which is a lot). This might explain why I haven't been regular lately, and also might explain why my 501s are getting tighter as the months bulge on by.



Back to business. This test involved chopping through a block of Kraft™ sharp cheddar (yummy) with a modern, foil-stamped, enhanced-cover comic, and a sloppy, droopy, Silver Age rag. I sensibly opted not to use any of my collection of classic *Conans* to compete with the "new" Cimmerian. Crom's Devils, lad—do you think I be crazed?

Well, for those of you stranded in the outback of Wisconsin with nothing but a block of cheese and a stack of hologram-covered modern-day comics, I've got some good news. If company calls, you've got the right set of utensils to chop up a tray of tasty hors d'oeuvres. While the right edge of the *Conan* comic sliced through Kraft's™ finest, it was the back cover that went through that block of yellow, milk by-products like...well, like a comic book through cheese. Which is to say that it sliced pretty well. I had just bought a fancy set of steak knives last week, and I'm thinking of tossing them out and just going down to the comic store and buying 10 different issues of *X-Men*. They're a lot cheaper, and you sure as heck can't read a knife, now can you?

It turns out that the old *Marvel Triple Action* just can't "cut it" as a kitchen utensil. This just goes to show you that the only thing reprint comics are good for is getting your hands on classic tales from comics' distant past, without having to pay the full price of admission to get the real thing. This is especially true if you have an upcoming dinner party. This comic is just plain dull (edged, that is). The story inside, however, was pretty good. It was an old Roy Thomas/John Buscema *Avengers* story featuring the return of Magneto. A little melodramatic, perhaps, but every page had plenty of action, and John B.'s art was always pretty good. A heck of a bargain at 35 cents. Just remember to keep a knife handy.

"I Must Have Vengeance!"

TEST 5: I'll tie a copy of both the new *Ghost Rider* and the old Johnny Blaze Ghost Rider to the back of my 'cycle and drag 'em around the block a few times.

THE title of this particular exercise really doesn't reflect what goes on in the test, but since it deals with Ghost Rider, I'm giving myself a sort of artistic license.

This time, I tied one copy each of the new *Ghost Rider* and the old *Ghost Rider* title to the back of my Suzuki VX-800™ and took them out for a drag, the idea being to see which one could take the most damage behind the wheels of a real motorcycle.

To hold up against the rigors of this test, I chose the modern Ghost Rider's big "double-sized" 50th issue and the original Ghost Rider's issue #40. The newer *GR* is the epitome of the modern comic: dark, tough, and grim. The comic was foil-stamped, embossed, *and* die-cut. Heck, it even had a second cover that was all foil. This was gonna be fun.

I attached both comics to the back of my motorcycle and took off. Initially, the ropes tangled, and I was forced to stop and straighten things out. But after I got up to speed, the comics pretty much stayed where they should have. After driving around for about 10 minutes with people shouting, "Hey, you're dragging something!" as I went by, I snuck out onto the freeway and really opened 'er up. I found that at any speed above 45 mph, the comics would lift off the ground and sail in the air behind the bike, making me feel like a hungover Shriner at the Fourth of July parade.

After stopping and removing the comics, I was surprised to find that both issues held up pretty well to the abuse. The modern-day *Ghost Rider* was heavier than its 1970s predecessor, so it stayed on the ground longer, but its heavier paper stock made it more than capable of handling the abuse.

Overall, both comics remained readable and came out looking just a little worse for the wear. But in all fairness, I'd have to give this round to the modern comics. It's doubtful that anything shy of getting beat up by a group of Hell's Angels would make me want to cross dinner spoons with the living Spirit of Vengeance, anyway.

"Wahoo!"

TEST 6: I'll put three rounds from a .357 Magnum through a copy of *Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos* and a recent copy of *Lobo*.

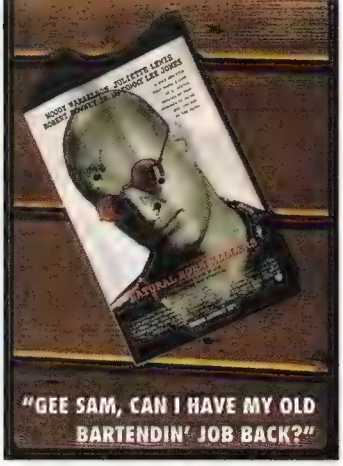
ASK just about anybody you know who's into handguns—as a collector or a target-shooting competitor—if they'll let you use one of their guns to shoot some holes in a couple of comic books. It might just be enough to get them to drop their membership in the NRA right away and support gun control.

Nonetheless, if you look long enough, and ask the right people, somebody will come out to the gun range and put six rounds through darn near anything that isn't either: a) living; or b) filled with explosives.

Well, the only thing explosive about these comics is the action between the covers. Was there ever any comic better than *Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos*? I doubt it. Just reading through any issue is a civics lesson on America after the second World War. Each issue featured Fury—or any one of his "hard-bitten Howlers"—knocking the tar out of some evil "Master Race" stooge like Baron Strucker. Just try to read one without laughing your fanny off. Go on, I dare you.

Lobo, on the other hand, is about as subtle as a knee to the groin (or a visit from the Main Man himself). A cross between the Incredible Hulk and your favorite neighborhood biker, Lobo is one tough fraggin' bastich.

But no matter how tough he is, comics are, after all, just comics. A .357 Magnum, however, is...a .357 Magnum.


"GEE SAM, CAN I HAVE MY OLD BARTENDIN' JOB BACK?"

The rounds—three each—ripped straight through the comics faster than you can say "For Mature Readers Only."

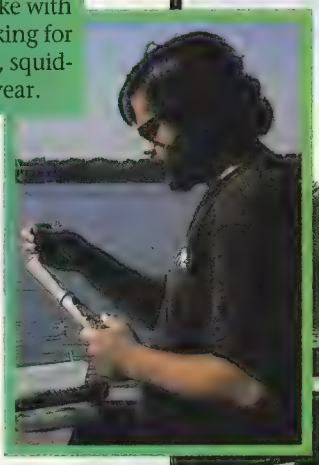
In the *Sgt. Fury* comic, one round had the decency to go right through a panel shot of Hitler's head! Take that, ya paper-hangin' s.o.b.!

The exit wounds on Lobo's mag came out right through an ad for Oliver Stone's film *Natural Born Killers* and a big shot of Woody Harrelson's *cabeza*. Very fitting, I'd say.

All in all, both comics suffered the same fate in this test. The bullets showed no mercy on either one, which is kind of what bullets do anyway. I had to label this contest as another draw, but I did so quietly, back at my own house, since saying "draw" on a gun range is just not good etiquette.

Gone Fishin'

TEST 7: I'll go fishing for Minnesota's elusive Northern pike with a copy of *Aquaman*, starring the new, bearded—and looking for a good barber—version, and a version with the clean-cut, squid-loving pal of Aqualad that I used to read about yesteryear.



"AQUAMAN OUGHTA GET FISH JUMPIN' ONTO THE FREAKIN' DOCK!"

A whole lot of modern-day heroes are pretty much the same as their older classic versions, except for a couple of things. First, they tend to be more grim and gritty. Translation: they don't smile very much. Secondly, they have to look tougher in order to keep in step with their new image, so they tend to grow beards, long hair, and the like, in order to more closely dovetail with the artist's or writer's new "spin" on the character. Witness Aquaman.

Back when I was a punk kid, Aquaman was probably the driest (pun intended, thank you) and least interesting of any of DC's mainstream heroes. I mean, what could he really do? Summon up a bunch of fish and splash around a lot? Thanks to mega-scribe Peter David, today's *Aquaman* is infinitely more readable, and the character's more stylish, too, with his flowing golden locks—which I think would kind of get in the way underwater, but then again, I don't write the title.

I decided, what would be a better test of these comics than to actually go fishing with them as bait? So I traveled down to St. Paul, Minn.'s beautifully brown and fertilizer-filled Lake Como, the pristine setting for this particular brand of foolishness. Wrapping each book up like a two-day-old carp, I hooked the bait and cast off in search of Minnesota's best trophy game fish: the fearsome Northern pike.

Well, as my uncle used to say, I was skunked. The pike found no interest in either comic, and all I caught were some strange looks from the Park Police. I tried fishing in close around the shallows where my neighbor said the "big ones" were. I tried casting off the dock into the deep water where the same neighbor said the "other big ones" were. I even tried to convince my neighbor to let me borrow his fishing boat so I could troll the center of the lake where he said the "really big ones" were. I came to the conclusion that whatever the big ones were doing, they had no interest in reading about the adventures of Aquaman.

Both comics stood up to the test fairly well, considering they ended up sopping wet and had a hook stuck through them. The fish, however, proved to be the final judges here—even though I thought the mere sight of Aqualad on the cover of the old *Aquaman* would register a strike, out of pure spite. I was forced to rate this test as another draw.

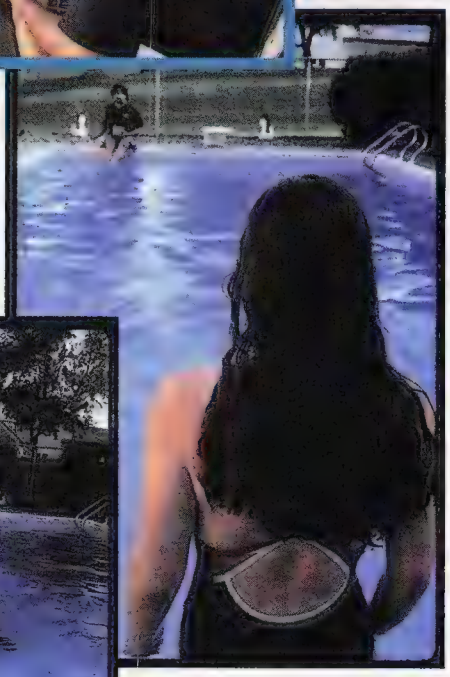
IN case you are wondering, "Imperius Rex!" is what the old Sub-Mariner used to say just before he unleashed another one of his patented attacks on New York City. The new Subby has an earring, wears three-piece suits, and wouldn't dare attack New York for fear of losing some market share.

"Imperius Rex!"

TEST 8: Today's Sub-Mariner versus the buzz-cut Namor I used to know—as underwater flippers. By the way, don't these undersea kingdoms have a place where a guy can get a haircut?

Since Aquaman was fish bait in the previous test, I just had to put Marvel's undersea hero through some kind of torture as well. I always thought those wings on his ankles were kind of neat, and it gave me the idea to tape a couple of examples of Namor's adventures to the feet of my niece Kallie and let her swim around a while in the neighbors' pool. (They were away on vacation, so don't tell.)

Kallie was the proper test subject for this experiment because she used to be on her high school swim team. Also, she's the only one of my assorted nieces and nephews who reads enough good science fiction to be worthy, including Ray Bradbury—which shows a wisdom far beyond her years.



I duct taped a modern-day copy of *Namor* to one foot and an old issue of *Prince Namor: The Sub-Mariner* to the other, and she dove in.

Immediately, she commented on the fact that the comics were actually starting to pull her under as they got wet. Nonetheless, the books themselves were starting to disintegrate in the pool's high-chlorine water mixture. Fearing for her life—and my ability to finish this article and get paid by *Wizard*—I was forced to place her on a big pink inflatable seashell and have her paddle around the pool.

I'm saddened to report that if you need a cheap pair of effective swim fins, there are better places to look than your local comic shop. Once again, neither comic proved capable of standing up to the damage we inflicted, and Kallie was almost stuck in the pool when they got too heavy for her to climb out.

The verdict: wait one hour after reading a comic before going swimming.

More Powerful Than a Locomotive?

TEST 9: It's the resurrected Superman versus the not-dead-yet Kryptonian from the '60s, duking it out over a stretch of train tracks.

SUPERMAN is the grandest and greatest of all comic book characters. Like the Rose Bowl, he's the Granddaddy of 'em all. It was only fitting that we included a Silver Age Supes and today's back-from-the-dead Metropolis Marvel in this torture test. And what better method than to challenge his old slogan, "more powerful than a locomotive."

If you want to run a comic book over with a train, I can give you two tips. First off, don't. Getting hit by a train hurts. Just ask anybody it's happened to—that is, if they're still breathing. Second, don't go up to the Burlington Northern railroad office and ask for permission. I think the yard foreman is probably still laughing at me.

No, I had to sneak down to the tracks, lay down the books, and hide behind some bushes and watch. As the train approached, my apprehension

grew. What if the train derailed and spilled toxic waste all over St. Paul? What if the police caught me and booked me for attempted derailment of a train? What if I fell asleep waiting for the train and missed the whole thing?

Well, as it turned out, I didn't have to wait long. The big 4:15 for Milwaukee came lumbering down the tracks right on time at 5:30. As he approached the comics, the engineer gave a little toot on his whistle as if to say, "Hey, get those books in some mylar and get a backing board behind them!"

Well, in case you were wondering, there isn't a comic book made yet that can stand up to a several-ton train. The engine passed over both comics and, just like that, they were gone. Not a staple was left behind. I can only guess that the remains of those comics are either somewhere in the driving wheels or littered across the tracks somewhere between here and Milwaukee.

Because I'm a sentimentalist—and because I read too many comics—I hope that a new miracle might occur down by the Snelling train yards. Maybe like their comic book star himself, these books will come back from beyond the grave, and I'll finally be able to see which one survived the test better. But until then, this is another test that has to end in a draw.

"I'll Be Out in a Minute!"

TEST 10: Sometimes just reading comics can be the best test of all.

ALL these tests—plus the five Pepsis™ I drank while waiting for the train—led me to one final conclusion. I had to go to the bathroom. Snatching up the final two competitors, I headed for the reading room with a classic Jack Kirby-penned *Captain America* and an issue of Bravura's *Dreadstar*.

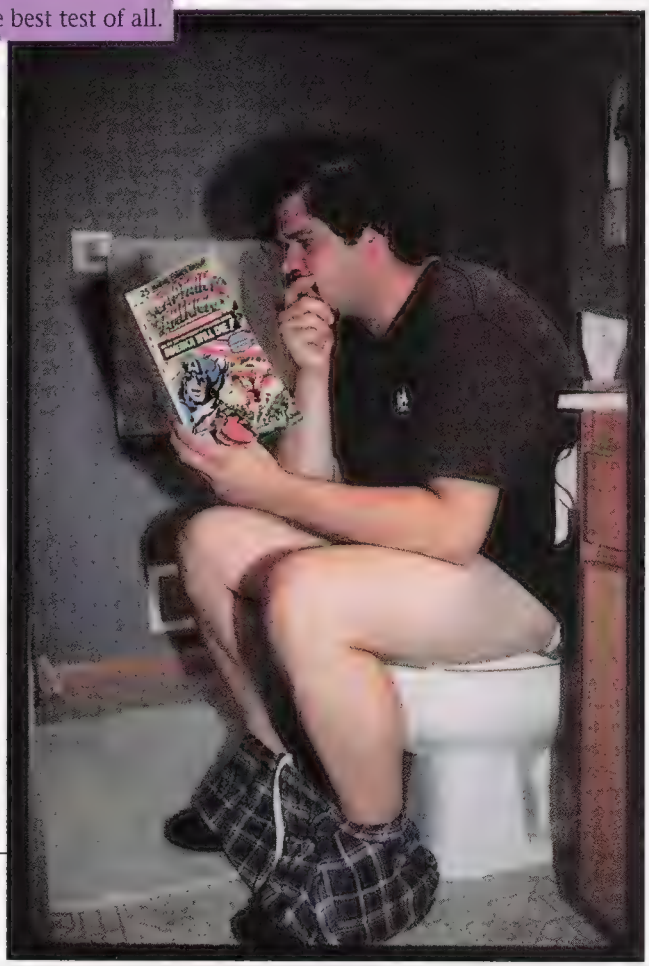
I'll tell you what: Kirby is a master of the comic book art form and, when it comes to writing a good comic, Peter David is one of the best. Hats off to Ernie Colón for the superb *Dreadstar* art. And now we're down to the central point of this whole test. Comics from any time period—Gold, Silver, Plastic, whatever you want to call it—are great.

Most books of any age are just plain good reading. Sure, a lot of the Golden and Silver Age comics are classics, the likes of which we will never see again. But entire long boxes full of great comics are being produced every month, right here and now. Maybe some modern comics aren't written as well as others, but that's always been the case.

The important thing is to find a comic—any comic—and read it. Looking back over my test results, I can see that in the contests where a winner was declared, it was usually the newer comics that withstood the stress the best. But for the most part, the old-timers did pretty well.

I'm of a mind to say that any comic makes a lousy investment, monetarily speaking. Hell, invest in *true* gold or silver. Something you can hoard and make some sure money on. If you want to get rich, play the stock market. Me, I just picked up the latest *Hellblazer*, and I'm heading up to the library to check it out.

I just hope they're not out of toilet paper. ☆

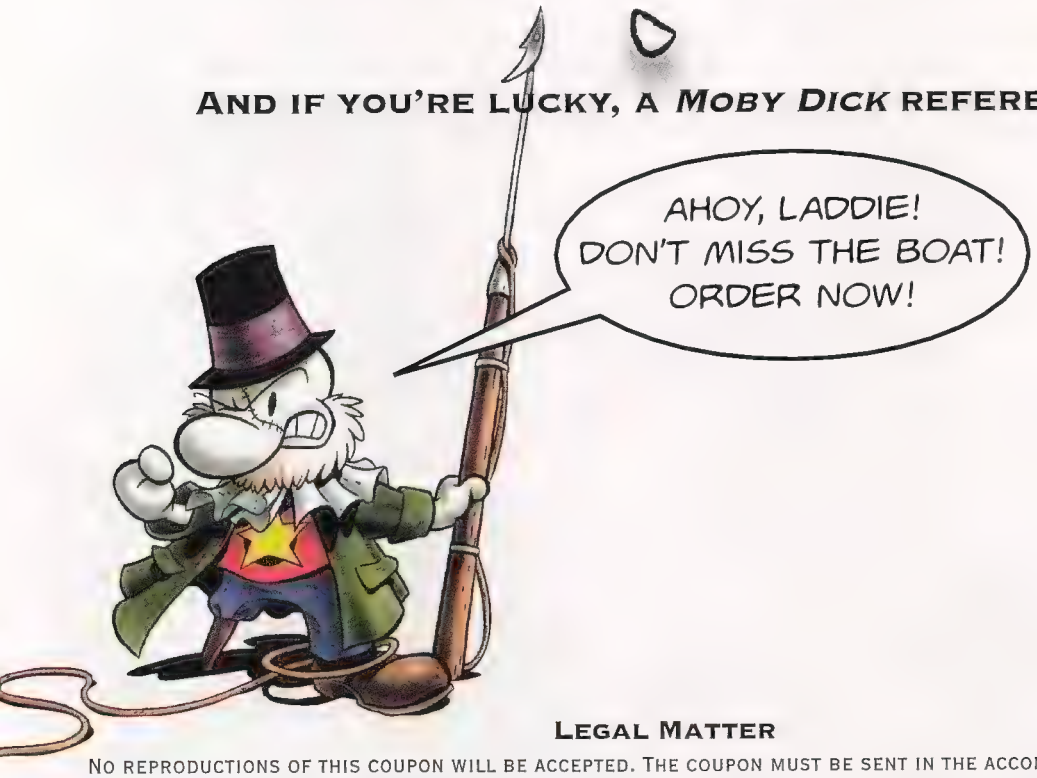


Zach, the malamute dog who shares a house in St. Paul, Minnesota with freelance writer John Seals, later commented that the issue of Spawn *he partially consumed "gave him gas."*

HEY! IS THIS THE LINE FOR THE BONE #13½?

Available for a limited time only in this exclusive offer, Jeff Smith has created an all new tale of Fone Bone and friends, but that ain't all. Here's the deal:

- original Bone comic!
- Bone sketchbook!
- Jeff Smith interview!
- And if you're lucky, a *Moby Dick* reference!



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No reproductions of this coupon will be accepted. The coupon must be sent in the accompanying envelope. Each request must be accompanied by $2 for shipping and handling or the Great Red Dragon's gonna leave a present on your front lawn. Requests will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis. Offer good only while supplies last. Allow eight to 12 weeks for delivery.

This offer expires March 31, 1995.

Bone and all artwork shown ™ & © Jeff Smith

Looking Ahead

What 1995 holds for the comic book fan.

by Jack Curtin

1994: In the heat of summer, the DC Universe ceased to exist. Chaos disrupted the Valiant Universe. Malibu's Ultraverse and Milestone Media's Dakota Universe emerged as popular new superhero realities. Over at Marvel, we lost Wonder Man, but got two—count 'em two—Spider-Men, and the four-issue *Marvels* mini-series brought a powerful new perspective to the world that Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, and Steve Ditko wrought all those years ago. Hellboy, Madman, and Martha Washington added luster to the already high-profile Legend group. The Bravura gang brought back *Dreadstar* and *Star Slammers*, and introduced *'Breed* and *Edge*. The success of *The Mask* film made Dark Horse Comics a serious player in Hollywood. Inter-company crossovers came back into the spotlight when Spawn met Batman, and Batman met The Punisher, who, in turn, met Archie. Despite all the fears, *Sandman*—like the Energizer Bunny—just kept going and going and going. Jeff Smith's *Bone* went from small-press wonder to absolute smash hit, Terry Moore's *Strangers in Paradise* and Jason Lutes's *Jar of Fools* rapidly achieved cult status, and Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics* convincingly explained what comics are all about. Defiant gave up the ghost, apparently forever. However, as the year drew to a close, we witnessed the birth of a brand-new company with BIG plans.

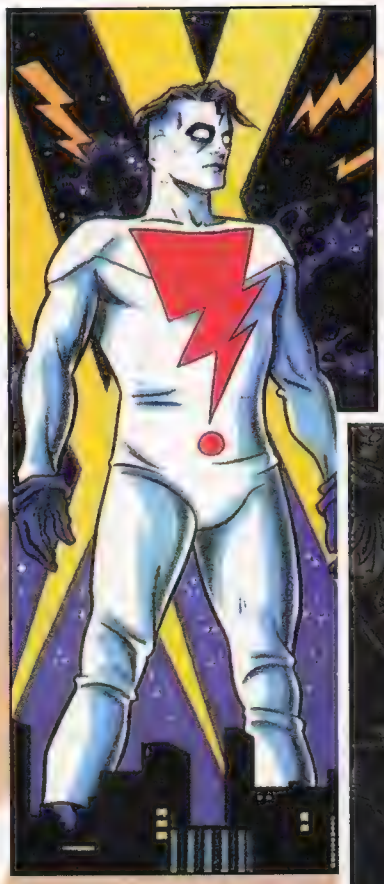
What a year. How could the industry ever top that? Let us count the ways, by looking ahead to 1995...

Dark Horse Comics

The strategy of establishing a beachhead in Hollywood began to pay big dividends for Dark Horse in 1994, with the instant success of *The Mask* and *Time Cop*, and indications are that *Tank Girl*, a property licensed by Dark Horse, will maintain the company's winning streak in 1995. Tank Girl, according to group editor of creator-owned projects, Bob Schreck, is "an anarchist's dream come true." Also in development is *Virus*—the story of a spy ship that accidentally picks up a computer virus in outer space, which quickly takes over the ship—which was a 1993 mini-series based upon a film script, and seems on the way to completing the circle.

One of the key elements at Dark Horse is Legend, the creator imprint established by Frank Miller and John Byrne. Miller's *Sin City: The Big Fat Kill* will finish its five-issue run in March and be followed by another *Sin City* mini-series in the fall. Miller says he's committed to launching a new *Sin City* each November for the foreseeable future. He also revealed that he and Dave Gibbons would like to do a Martha Washington adventure every year as well, and the success of this year's *Martha Washington Goes to War* should be an incentive to try and maintain that pace, though nothing has been announced as of yet. Miller and Geof Darrow team up for *The Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot*, a two-issue mini-series scheduled to begin in the spring; the story centers on a "boy robot" received by a U.S. military official as a gift from the Japanese.

Byrne's popular *Next Men* title, which has maintained a monthly schedule and numbering—even though each four-issue story arc is identified as a separate mini-series—has gone on hiatus, and won't reappear until *Next Men: Pain* begins next May. The storyline is reported to explain how the Next Men went from the present to the future, as recounted in the graphic novel, *2112*. Waiting fans can take some solace in *The Torch of Liberty Special*; the January one-shot, written by Byrne and drawn by Kieron Dwyer, is set in the 1950s, and features the character that appeared in the late, lamented *Danger Unlimited*.



TM & © Michael Allred

Dark Horse's Madman (above), Hellboy (right), and X (below) appear to be ready'n waiting for '95.

Mike Mignola's *Hellboy* was one of the surprise hits of 1994. Mignola will follow up the character's current four-issue run in *Dark Horse Presents* with a second full-color mini-series debuting next fall, titled *Hellboy: Wake the Devil*. Vampire goddesses and undead Nazis are just a few of the supernatural phenomena Hellboy has to deal with. Art Adams breaks out his popular back-up feature from the first *Hellboy* mini-series in a four-part series of its own, due out next winter, according to Dark Horse. *Monkeyman & O'Brien: Attack of the Shrewmanoid* brings the super-ape and the lovely scientist face-to-face with a monster attack on San Francisco.

TM & © Dark Horse Comics

Rounding out the Legend picture: Michael Allred's *Madman Comics* will continue at its bi-monthly pace in 1995. There's no word yet, as of this writing, on a new Concrete project from Paul Chadwick.

There are some major changes in store for Dark Horse's superhero universe, Comics' Greatest World, starting with *Nexus vs. Vortex*, a five-issue mini-series, which debuts in February, written by Mike Baron with art by newcomer Joe Comstock, Baron's personal choice for the assignment. Nexus, an assassin, comes from the future to bring his unique, and permanent, brand of justice to the greatest mass murderer of all time: the man from the Vortex. *Catalyst*'s Grace guest-stars, which is nice, because she's gone, gone, gone from Golden City, where, in *Agents of Law* #1 (which replaces *Catalyst* on the monthly schedule in February), a new, no-nonsense boss named Law takes over. His arrival, and this brand-new monthly series, is going to mark a turning point in CGW. Keith Giffen writes and Dan Lawlis pencils.

TM & © Mike Mignola

The changes in CGW keep on coming in March, when the four-issue *Mecha* turns the armored hero into one of the most powerful beings on Earth. The much-demanded *Ghost* debuts as a monthly series in April, with Eric Luke writing and Adam Hughes handling the art. In a unique arrangement designed to help Hughes maintain a monthly schedule, the art team from this past summer's *Ghost Special*, Matt Haley and Tom Simmons, will illustrate every fourth issue. *X*, best-selling of the ongoing CGW titles, will move into its second year with writer Steven Grant still at the helm; artists Chris Warner and Timothy Bradstreet will do

a three-issue stint early in the year, and then Javier Saltares comes aboard. Jo Duffy (*Catwoman*) takes over as writer of *Barb Wire* with issue #10 in April, with pencils and covers by Andrew Robinson (who debuted on the character in this summer's San Diego Con one-shot). Keith Giffen continues writing *Division 13*, with art by Chris Alexander and Mike Sellers, while John Arcudi and Ted Naifeh continue to bring us *The Machine* monthly.

Other CGW projects planned for 1995 include *The Mask World Tour*—the Mask emerges through the Vortex and into CGW, where he meets Barb Wire, Ghost, X, and Law—a four-issue bi-weekly series starting in June (no creative team is set yet); D.G. Chichester writes an ongoing *Motorhead* monthly beginning in the fall starring CGW's hardluck hero; Mike Baron scripts, J. H. Williams pencils, and Jimmy Palmiotti inks the fall's *King Tiger* mini-series, chock full of kung fu and magic; and the teen hero, Hero Zero, gains a mini-series, also in the fall.

Dark Horse's *Star Wars: Droids Rebellion* in June should please C-3PO and R2D2 fans everywhere.

TM & © LUCASFILM LTD.

The Dark Horse licensing arm will be busy as well. Four *Star Wars* mini-series are on tap: *Star Wars: Heir to the Empire*, Mike Baron, Olivier Vatine, and Fred Blanchard's adaptation of Timothy Zahn's first novel in his trilogy, should be out in September; June should see the release of *Star Wars: Droids Rebellion*, written by Ryder Windham and illustrated by Ian Gibson, which picks up immediately after *Droids #6*; *Star Wars: Splinter of the Mind's Eye*, Terry Austin and Chris Sprouse's adaptation of Alan Dean Foster's book starts in December; and *Star Wars: River of Chaos*, spotlighting a more romantic and character-driven story, by Louise Simonson and June Brigman, should be out in late '95. The first will be six issues, and the others will be four-issue mini-series. The end of '95 should also see a 48-page Boba Fett one-shot written by John Wagner and illustrated by Cam Kennedy.

Still other film-related projects are on the way: January sees the start of the four-issue mini-series *Aliens: Berserker* written by John Wagner, penciled by Paul Mendoza, and inked by Andy Mushynsky, and deals with the Berserker Team first mentioned in *Aliens: Tribes*; *Aliens vs. Predator: Duel* is a two-parter beginning in March, written by Randy Stradley, with Javier Saltares and Jimmy Palmiotti handling the art; *Aliens vs. Predator: Insider* retells the story which appeared in the *Dark Horse Insider* in May; and *Aliens vs. Predator: War*, a four-issue mini-series scheduled for May, takes up the story from *Aliens: Berserker*, with Randy Stradley writing, and an artist to be announced. *The Shadow: Hell's Heat Wave*, a three-issue mini-series beginning in April, pits the Shadow against some explosive ethnic difficulties, with Michael Kaluta and Joel Goss writing, and Gary Gianni on the art. The fully painted three-issue mini-series, *James Bond: The Quasimodo Gambit*, is also slated for next year, where .007 abandons his original mission after a major arms deal goes bad, written by Don McGregor, with art by Gary Caldwell. Starting this December, Indiana Jones goes in search of the Philosophers Stone in *Indiana Jones and the Iron Phoenix*, a four-issue mini-series written by Lee Marrs, and illustrated by Leo Duranona. Then in April, the four-issue mini-series *Indiana Jones and the Spear of Destiny* pits the whip-cracking, snake-hating hero against those Nazis who are trying to reconstruct the powerful spear, written by Elaine Lee, with art by Will Simpson and Dan Spiegle on the first issue, and just Spiegle for the remainder of the series.

Other creator-owned projects will include *Black Dragon*, from Chris Claremont and John Bolton, reprinting the original story released by Epic Comics; *Visions*, a deluxe over-sized art book by Arthur Suydam; and *Harlan Ellison's Dream Corridor*, which debuts in January as a one-shot and continues as a four-issue anthology series tentatively scheduled for an April start-off date, featuring various top-name creators and artists who will adapt Ellison's famous stories.

DC Comics

DC Comics's intricate 1994 master plan seems to have worked out just as the company had hoped. The five-issue *Zero Hour* mini-series was one of the most anticipated and debated events of the past year, and the Zero Month promotion which followed on its heels helped revitalize the DC Universe for readers, both new and old. Given all the mind-boggling events of the past couple of years at DC, plans for 1995 seem almost placid. Almost.

For Superman, it seems like the troubles never end. Some days, the Man of Steel must wonder why he didn't just stay dead. Just to prove that things are never so bad that they can't get worse, his greatest fear is about to be realized: the revelation of his secret identity to one of his greatest foes. All this is part of a storyline which culminates in *Superman* #100 in March: "The Death of Clark Kent."

NOTE: All comics are listed by their ship dates.

JANUARY

1 Happy New Year

2 Cesar Romero, actor who played the Joker in TV's *Batman*, dies

4 Captain America begins losing abilities; "Fighting Chance" begins—#425

- "Tree of Knowledge" storyline begins—*Daredevil* #326

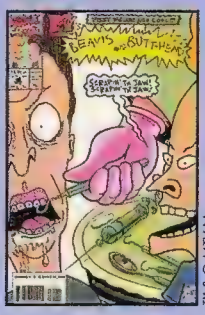
10 CIE announces agreement to acquire Moondog's comic store chain

11 Valor dies—#17

- Jamie Madrox dies—*X-Factor* #100
- *Alpha Flight* ends with #130

18 Green Lantern kills Guardians, amasses tons o' power—#50

- Bravura imprint begins with *'Breed* #1
- Cyclops & Jean Grey get hitched—*X-Men* #30
- *Excalibur* #75—Rachel & Capt. Britain combine to become Britanic



TM & © MTV NETWORKS

- *Beavis & Butt-Head* #1
- *Zorro* #1

25 Mystique revealed to be Nightcrawler's mother—*X-Men Unlimited* #4

- *Marvels* #3
- Lyja gives birth—*FF* #386
- *Moon Knight* #60—series ends, Platt's last Marvel work, Moon Knight dies
- Punisher replaced temporarily—*War Journal* #64

FEBRUARY

1 Dark Horse's Comics' Greatest World returns with *X* #1

2 Wizard Press moves to posh new digs in Congers, N.Y.

3 Rob Liefeld announces Jim Shooter will write *Youngblood* late in '94

6 Jack "King" Kirby, legendary comic book creator, dies

8 *Gen*[13] #1

- *Rune* #1
- Peter Parker learns secrets of "parents"—*Amazing Spider-Man* #388
- *X-Force/New Warriors* crossover begins—*X-Force* #32
- *Lady Death* #1

TM & © ACCLAIM ENTERTAINMENT INC.

15 Kyle Rayner's first adventure as Green Lantern—#51

16 Joe Quesada leaves Valiant

22 *Marvels* #4

- Major new *FF* storyline, "Nobody Gets Out Alive," begins—#387
- John Byrne introduces *Danger Unlimited*

MARCH

1 Cyclops & Jean Grey's honeymoon begins—*Adv's of Cyclops & Phoenix* #1

5 *Conan and the Young Warriors* cartoon premieres

6 Murray Boltinoff, DC editor, dies

TM & © DC Comics

After that? Nobody's talking. There will be a new outlet for Super-stories in '95, though, as *Showcase '95* switches from Batman characters to Superman characters for its lead feature, with Supergirl getting the starring role in the first two-parter.

Speaking of Batman, things have settled down a bit after more than two years of turmoil and unexpected twists and turns. Bruce Wayne is back in the cape and cowl (for good, this time—whatever that means in comic book time), and sporting a brand-new look. The four main titles in the Batman Family (*Batman, Detective Comics, Shadow of the Bat,* and *Robin*) will still have subplots running through them, as well as occasional crossovers, but will be mostly self-contained for much of 1995, allowing the new art teams (consisting of Kelley Jones and John Beatty on *Batman*, and Barry Kitson and Ray McCarthy on *Batman: Shadow of the Bat*) time to settle in. Early summer will see *Batman Forever*, the third Batman movie, possibly creating a new flurry of excitement around the character. While it hasn't been announced as yet, an adaptation seems almost inevitable. And once the weather starts turning cooler again next fall, the editors promise another "Big Event" to shake up the Bat-titles.

Another summer movie blockbuster that they're looking forward to at DC is *Judge Dredd*, which should give a shot in the arm to the two Dredd monthlies introduced this year, *Judge Dredd* and *Judge Dredd: Legends of the Law*. Another *Batman/Judge Dredd* one-shot is also in the works. Much of DC's strategy is clearly designed to add more licensed properties into its already diversified publishing structure. *Babylon 5*, based on the TV show, has recently been added as an ongoing monthly series; the *Animaniacs Christmas Special* released this month is reportedly the harbinger of an ongoing *Animaniacs* title to begin in 1995; and a *Street Fighter* one-shot is due in February.

Back in the DC Universe, four other titles join Superman in reaching their 100th issues in the first half of 1995. The most eagerly awaited is probably *Flash* #100, due in February, which closes out the six-part "Terminal Velocity" storyline that developed out of *Zero Hour* and writer Mark Waid's 40-issue revamping of the character. With Keystone City threatened by Kobra, can Flash save the day? More importantly, who is wearing the Flash costume? Two weeks later, Flash fans can experience a new rush, with the debut of the monthly *Impulse* title, also written by Waid.

Justice League America reaches #100 in April, an issue marked by the return of a controversial former member, the induction of an often-requested fan favorite into the ranks, and plenty of other good stuff. Two books hit the centennial mark in June: *Wonder Woman* and *Green Arrow*. No information about either is available at this point, but we'll keep you updated as soon as it is.

The Jerry Ordway-scripted, and Peter Kraus-drawn, *The Power of Shazam!* is scheduled to debut in January, and Chris Claremont's *Sovereign 7*, postponed from this fall, will be on the spring schedule as well.

DC has no announced plans for a summer crossover, but there will be an "Annuals Event" again in 1995. What form that will take hasn't been revealed—rumor has it that Mark Waid will be involved—but DC spokespersons did make it clear in San Diego that this year's successful Elseworlds concept would not be repeated. Elseworlds has apparently been put to rest for a while, except for special projects, lest it become too commonplace.

Say it, Billy, *SAY IT*! DC introduces *The Power of Shazam!* series in January.

The other big story out of DC for 1995 is inter-company crossovers. DC and Malibu Entertainment announced an intended crossover at San Diego, and both companies urged fans to vote for one of several possible team-ups. The characters and creators involved, as well as a format and schedule, will probably be announced by the time this sees print. Even vaguer are rumors that DC and Dark Horse are exploring more venues wherein their characters might intermingle, but it's way too early to reveal anything at the moment.

And then there's a certain writer/artist whose ears must be "byrning," since there's so much talk on the street about his big, big project from DC and Marvel. While no publisher

TM & © Mike Mignola

15 DC's *Batman/Spawn*
- Doug Ramsey "returns" as Douglock—*Excalibur* #77
- *Ghost Rider 2099* #1

21 Walter Lantz, creator of Woody Woodpecker and others, dies

22 Lois Lane fired from Daily Planet—*Superman* #89
- Rai dies—*Rai & The Future Force* #22
- Mike Mignola's *Hellboy* #1

29 *Armorines* #1

APRIL

5 Image's *Spawn/Batman*
- Michael Allred becomes eighth Legend member
- *Vengeance of Vampirella* #1
- *Shi* #1

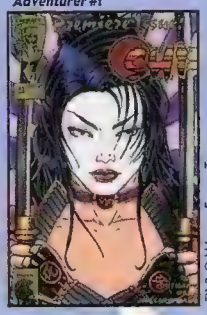
7 Acclaim Entertainment Inc. announces plans to acquire Voyager Communications Inc., publisher of Valiant comics

8 Nirvana's Kurt Cobain found dead in his home—victim of suicide.

12 *Superman/Doomsday* #1
- *Madman Comics* #1

15 *Space Ghost: Coast to Coast* TV talk show begins

19 Rick Jones & Marlo wed—*Incredible Hulk* #418
- Black Knight & Sersi leave this reality—*Avengers* #375
- Conan returns—*Conan the Adventurer* #1



TM & © William Elliott Tucci

- *WildC.A.T.s* #10—introduces Huntsman, written by Chris Claremont
- *Dreadstar* returns, as a Bravura book

25 Stan Lee, chairman and publisher of Marvel Comics, is signed to a lifetime contract with Marvel

26 "KnightQuest: The Crusade" ends—*Detective* #675
- "KnightQuest: The Search" ends—Batman: *LOTDK* #61
- Thor gets new costume—#375
- Stephen Platt begins run on *Prophet*—#5
- Topps's *Mars Attacks* #1

MAY

3 *Action* #700—"Fall of Metropolis," Lois regains job
- *Secret Weapons* revamped—#11

8 Lois almost marries Lex on *Lois & Clark*

10 Huntress stars in own miniseries
- *Force Works* #1
- First "Images of Tomorrow" book, *StormWatch* #25

13 *The Crow* movie released nationwide

15 Vicki Harvey, CEO of Lorne-Harvey Publications, dies

17 Flash's protégé, Impulse, first appears—*Flash* #92
- Superman/Milestone Media crossover begins—*The Man of Steel* #35
- *Violator* #1

19 UltraForce introduced—#0A, in *Wizard* #35

will admit it, on or off the record, creator John Byrne has said there're discussions of a major Darkseid/Galactus crossover book arriving at a comics shop near you early this coming year. And, remember, you didn't hear it here.

DC/Vertigo

DC Comics's Vertigo imprint, now two years old, is the sales surprise of the year as writer Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* saga is still unfolding. Not that anyone's complaining, mind you. The highly acclaimed title will continue to be the star in Vertigo's crown for at least a portion of the year ahead. When *The Sandman* does end, a new Death mini-series by Gaiman and artist Chris Bachalo is planned to ease the withdrawal pains of ardent fans, to be followed by a monthly anthology series, *The Dreaming*, featuring many familiar characters from the pages of *Sandman*.

In a late summer interview with the Westfield Comics Service Newsletter, *Worlds of Westfield*, artist Charles Vess revealed another forthcoming Gaiman project for Vertigo. This will be a four-issue Prestige Format mini-series called *Stardust*, which, Vess says, will then be collected into book form and co-published by DC Comics and a book publisher for distribution to trade book stores. According to Vess, *Stardust* will be fully painted and will explore the worlds of Faerie, centering around the adventures of a young lad who can find anything that's lost, and a woman who falls out of the sky. Vertigo has not officially announced this project yet, and whether it will appear on the 1995 schedule is open to question.

Ted McKeever is expected to establish himself as a major player in the Vertigo Universe with *Industrial Gothic*, a five-issue mini-series appearing in early '95. McKeever (*Doom Patrol*), who is also reportedly in the early stages of several other Vertigo projects, wrote and drew this cautionary tale of an alternate reality where physical beauty and perfection have become the law of the land. Another pair of fan favorites, Joe R. Lansdale

™ & © DC Comics

Vertigo's Jonah Hex returns.

and Tim Truman, will hit the trails again in February with a second weird-western mini-series, *Jonah Hex: Riders of the Worm and Such*, in which Jonah meets singing cowboys, monster worms, and other fun creatures. While it hasn't been announced yet, writer James Robinson has reportedly agreed to do a second *Witchcraft* mini-series. Word is that Vertigo would also like to get the same sort of commitment from writer Elaine Lee on *Vamps*.

Preacher, by Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon, joins the roster of monthly Vertigo titles in early '95. It's about a small-town preacher who develops the ability to have people obey him instantly and thereupon sets out on a wild journey across America to try and find out what has happened to him.

Image Comics

A familiar face will be added to the ongoing monthly Image lineup in '95 when *WildStar* debuts, written by Al Gordon with art by a not-yet-announced penciler. WildStar, co-created by Gordon and Jerry Ordway, originally starred in a four-issue mini-series at Image and got caught up in the implosion when the company cut back on virtually all projects not being done by one of the founding members.

The Image founders each approach the year ahead with their own unique styles. The inimitable Todd McFarlane announces that "*Spawn* continues into '95 with Todd McFarlane guiding it all the way." Given the success of *Spawn* so far under those guidelines, that's probably about as sound a business plan as there is in the industry.

Information from Rob Liefeld's Extreme Studios is sketchy, but plentiful. *Youngblood Year One*, written by Kurt Busiek with art by Liefeld and Danny Miki, will continue to explore the behind-the-scenes secrets of the popular team into 1995. *The Legend of Supreme* is scheduled to begin as a mini-series this December. *Prophet* and *Supreme* remain on the monthly schedule, and January will see the release of the *Youngblood* TPB, which reprints *Youngblood* #1-#5, with the first issue completely redialogued. Also on the list for release sometime next year: *The Adventures of Badrock*, *Bloodwulf*, *Bloodpool* (consolidating *Youngblood* and *Team Youngblood*), and the "Extreme Sacrifice" crossover mini-series, commencing with a prologue in December's *Prophet* #9. The crossover—consisting of two bookends and six parts running through *Supreme*, *Bloodstrike*, *Brigade*, *Newmen*, *Team Youngblood*, and *Prophet*—promises some devastating results, including the end of Extreme, as Heaven and Hell collide.

The end of Extreme? Better believe it—in February, all the major Extreme Studios titles will be relaunched as part of the New Order. Readers will be treated to a new beginning for all Extreme characters, and a more cohe-

The Crow (The Movie) © Crowvision

23 *Star Trek: TNG* TV series ends
• Don Thompson, editor of *Comics Buyer's Guide*, dies
24 "KnightsEnd," pt. I—*Batman* #509
• *Kindred* #3A, first of eight WildStorm variant books with Whilce Portacio cover art
• Frank Miller and Dave Gibbons's *Martha Washington Goes to War* #1
26 Pop-freak Michael Jackson weds Elvis-heiress Lisa Marie Presley
31 Ice dies—*Justice League Task Force* #14
• *Star Slammers* #1

JUNE
7 Bruce Wayne returns as Batman—*Robin* #8
• *Worlds Collide* #1, centerpiece of DC/Milestone crossover
14 DC's *Batman/Punisher: Lake of Fire* crossover
• *The Punisher Meets Archie*
• "End of an Era," final Legion storyline, begins—*Legionnaires* #17

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17 *The Last Temptation of Alice* #1
• *The Lion King* opens
• O.J. Circus begins with his ride in the Bronco
18 Major Sotheby's auction of redone Marvel Silver Age covers, collecting a total of $1.7 million
21 Neal Pozner, creative director for DC, dies
• Rob Liefeld & Joy Beth Creel get engaged—*we* weren't invited!?
23 Liefeld returns to comics—*Youngblood* #6
28 Batman vs. Azrael—*Batman: LODTK* #63
• Spider-Clone (ugh) returns (first cameo)—*Spectacular Spider-Man* #215

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JULY
1 *Batman 3* changes to *Batman Forever*, Michael Keaton leaves role to be replaced by Val Kilmer
• *The Shadow* film released

™ & © Rob Liefeld Inc.

which gives him immense powers meant for someone else (by writing team Tom and Mary Bierbaum and artist Todd Nauck).

Prophet will enter his own new beginning and quest for a new destiny with an all-new series, after some revelations about his life hit him hard during "Extreme Sacrifice." *Prophet* #1 will be by highly popular artist Stephen Platt and *Robin* writer Chuck Dixon. Image's most powerful hero, Supreme, has his own problems—someone has stolen his mind, and he wants it back. *Supreme* #24, by penciler Cedric Nocon and a writer TBA, initiates a new chapter in his life, as he fits himself into the New Order.

Also, expected mini-series during '95 include: *Glory* (to be written by Jo Duffy, with a spring release), *Lethal* (shipping in mid-to-late-summer), and *Chapel*, where Spawn's killer recounts a battle with a Contra warlord

sive, stronger continuity. In addition, as the New Order gives readers a new jumping-on point for the books, fans can pick up *The New Order Handbook*, a behind-the-scenes guide to this revamping event. Some of the affected books include: *Bloodstrike* #19, in which Bloodstrike battles the Horde, an alliance of the planet's ten most dangerous criminals (by writers Robert Napton and Karl Altstaetter and artist Altstaetter); *Brigade* #17, where Battlestone is gone and the rest of his team is missing in action after "Extreme Sacrifice," and Troll must form a new team (written by DC's *New Titans* scribe Marv Wolfman and penciled by Anthony Winn); *Knightmare* #1, starring a new action/adventure hero who happens to be a Mafia hit man (by penciler Marat Mychaels, and written by John Ostrander); and *The Mark* #1, featuring a man who finds a powerful talisman called the "mark,"

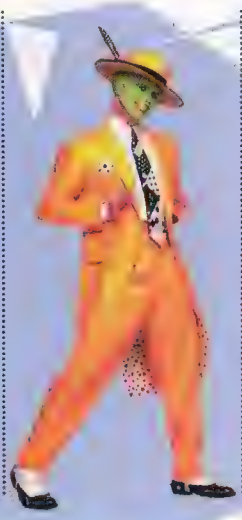
With possible silicone chase covers, Extreme's Glory and Top Cow's Velocity will fly solo in '95.

™ & © Top Cow Productions

4 Alfred Harvey, founder of Harvey Comics, dies
5 "Phalanx Covenant" crossover introduces Generation X—begins with *Uncanny X-Men* #316
• *WetWorks* #1 (finally)
12 Flash "dies"—*Zero Hour* #4
Superboy meets Superboy—#8
Robin meets Robin—#10
Batgirl returns—*Zero Hour* #4, *Batman* #511
16 Huge comet hits Jupiter, Wizard Press loses first softball game (Coincidence?)
19 Superman meets Jor-El & Lara—*Superman* #93
• All versions of Hawkman bond together into one—*Zero Hour* #3, *Hawkman* #13
• John Byrne briefly returns to Superman—*Action Annual* #6
• *Doom's IV* #1
26 Spidey reunites with his clone (ugh)—*Spectacular Spider-Man* #216
• First Visitor—*Chaos Effect Alpha*
• Bart Sears's first Ominous Press book, *Brute & Babe: "...It begins..."*
29 *The Mask* movie released
• Acclaim officially acquires Valiant

AUGUST

2 Aquaman loses his hand (ouch!)—*Aquaman* #2
• Jo Duffy's last *Catwoman*—#14
• New Geomancer chosen—*Geomancer* #1
• Topps's *Lone Ranger & Tonto* #1
• *Timewalker* #1
9 Green Arrow "kills" Hal Jordan, Power Girl gives birth—*Zero Hour* #0
• Marvel's *Punisher/Batman: Deadly Knights* crossover
• Soap star Walt Willey stars in *Dr. Mirage* #13
12 Baseball strike announced—*Wizard* A.D./baseball fanatic Matt T. talked down from ledge
13-15 Woodstock '94—rain, corporate bullying, and thousands of freaks, posers, and skinheads, can't ruin a good time for *Wiz* staffers.
16 Flash returns—*Flash* #0
• Legion of Super-Heroes history starts from scratch—*Legion* #0
• Super-foe Conduit introduced—*Superman: The Man of Steel* #0
• The 17th anniversary of Elvis's death
19 *Blankman* released
23 Old GL vs. New, Oa explodes—*GL* #0
• Rafferty, the Ultra-killer, first



™ & © Dark Horse Comics

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in Nicaragua (shipping in February, by writer Brian Witten and penciler Tom Tenney, with an ongoing series coming afterwards). In other Extreme news, the long-awaited Liefeld/Jim Shooter team-up on *Youngblood* has been put on indefinite hold.

At Highbrow Entertainment, Erik Larsen continues to be "The Man" on his increasingly popular *Savage Dragon* monthly series, and joins plotter Keith Giffen on the monthly *Freak Force*. March's *The Dragon: Blood and Guts* is a mini-series written and penciled by Jason Pearson, and inked by Karl Story, which fills in the period between the end of the original *Savage Dragon* mini-series and the ongoing book. *SuperPatriot: Liberty & Justice* is the second mini-series starring Image's version of a patriotic superhero, and begins in April. Tom and Mary Bierbaum script over Giffen plots; Dave Johnson, artist of the original series, handles the art. All the secrets about Star, the popular character from the pages of *Savage Dragon*, are revealed in a mini-series starting in May, also written by the Bierbaums, with art by Ben Herrera and Mike Christian. And spring will also bring a new series of mini-series starring Vanguard, written by Gary Carlson with art by various artists.

Marc Silvestri's Top Cow Productions studio has several number one offerings for the first half of 1995 and will be adding some well-known writers to its lineup. Chris Claremont finishes up his three-issue stint on *Cyberforce* in January, while Silvestri handles the art. *Cyberforce Origins Special: Stryker* is on tap for February, and the *Velocity* mini-series by Kurt Busiek and Rick Leonardi also starts that month. *Ripclaw* is a new mini-series debuting in March, with Eric Silvestri writing and Brandon Peterson penciling. The ongoing *Weapon Zero*, written by Walt Simonson and penciled by Joe Benitez, starts in April, and *The Darkness*, written by Ann Nocenti with an undetermined art team, begins the next month. A *Black Anvil* mini-series is scheduled to start in July.

Jim Valentino's Shadowline Ink studio will also be utilizing the talents of award-winning writer Busiek when *The Regulators* debuts this spring. It's an ongoing series, with art by Kerry Gammill, which takes the unique perspective of covering the private lives of an active group of supervillains from the pages of *ShadowHawk*: Blackjak, Arson, Vortex, and Hardedge. Scandal, the group's newest member, has an agenda of her own. Busiek will also write *The New ShadowHawk* ongoing series due this summer, with an art team to be announced. There's one question the series should answer: now that Paul Johnstone is dead, who will take up the armor and mantle of ShadowHawk? Another new series springing from the pages of *ShadowHawk* is *The Others*, by Valentino and an associate identified only as "Todd ******." This subterranean super-group consists of Guardd, Klone, Racket, and Rebound, and is also being developed as an animated series.

Jim Lee's WildStorm Productions will also be beefing up its creator lineup with some popular writers. James Robinson (*The Golden Age*, *Firearm*) will write a four-issue *WildC.A.T.s Foundation* mini-series which examines the roots of Lee's flagship team. Pencils are by Richard Johnson, and it begins in February. Steven T. Seagle (*Sandman Mystery Theatre*) writes *WarBlade/Ripclaw*, a three-parter which begins in January. It's a match between the deadly Native American warriors from the "Killer Instinct" crossover. Pencils are by Scott Clark, inks by Sal Regla. Seagle also scripts the four-issue *StormWatch Foundation* mini-series, chronicling the beginnings of the international team of heroes, which debuts in February with art by Tom Raney. *Gen13* returns as a regular series in March, with its creative team intact: Brandon Choi scripts, J. Scott Campbell pencils, and Alex Garner inks. *Union* debuts as a regular series that month as well, with Mike Heisler writing and a new art team of Ryan Benjamin and Tom McWeeney. In May, a big WildStorm-wide crossover event begins, though details are currently sketchy. All the present WildStorm ongoing series continue as well, and July brings a reissue of *StormWatch* #25, first seen in May of this past year, fitting seamlessly into regular continuity. The August issue will finally reveal the identity of the shadowy figure in the final panel.

The Maxx by Sam Keith and Bill Messner-Loebs, *Hellshock* by Jae Lee, and *Pitt* by Dale Keown and Brian Hotton will continue as regular series from Image.

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Wildstorm's *Gen13* will be starring in its own ongoing series, this March.

Malibu Comics

Malibu's Ultraverse took its success from 1993 to 1994, and there are major new projects and big changes in the works to keep that momentum going. A pair of long-awaited

appears in cameo—*Firearm* #11
• *UltraForce* #1
31 Defiant closes doors, Jim Shooter ducks on way out

SEPTEMBER
6 Dick Grayson becomes Batman—*Robin* #0
• Aquaman has hook attached to his hand (ouch!)—#0
• Marvel initiates Deluxe books (ouch!) with *Uncanny X-Men* #318
13 Second Superman body discovered—*Superman: The Man of Steel* #38
• Batman meets Superman in *Batman Adventures*—#25
• *Generation X* #1

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• Legion wakes up—*X-Factor* #108
17 *WildC.A.T.s* and *Skeleton Warriors* cartoons premiere
19 Kate Mulgrew cast as captain on *ST: Voyager*, replaces C. Bujold
25 *Marvel Action Hour* animated series premieres
27 Image X-Month begins, in which artists switch books—*WildC.A.T.s* #14
• Archie decides between Betty & Veronica; picks a different girl named Cheryl Blossom—*Veronica* #39
• R.E.M.'s newest album, *Monster*, released

OCTOBER
4 Malibu/Ultraverse's "Hostile Takeover" begins—*The Night Man* #12
• Marvel Select's *Tales to Astonish*

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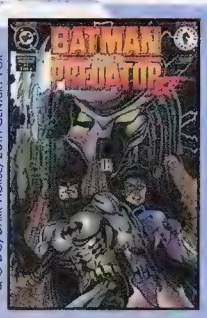
• Dark Horse's *Star Wars: Tales of the Jedi—Dark Lords of the Sith, Book I* #1
5 Doug Wildey, creator of Jonny Quest, dies
11 *Batman/Predator II* #1



™ & © DC/Dark Horse/20th Century Fox

• Wonder Woman replaced by Artemis—#92
• *Bishop* #1
• Wolverine's healing powers return—#88
13 Tom DeFalco no longer

series will also debut from the creator-owned Bravura imprint, and Malibu's licensing arm has another major title scheduled to begin in January, as well as big plans for *Mortal Kombat* and *BattleTech* mini-series.

The major news for the first quarter of '95 in Ultraverse concerns *Godwheel*, a stand-alone four-issue mini-series which finally brings the often-mentioned creator contributions of science fiction legend Larry Niven to the fore; he was part of the original conceptual team for the Ultraverse. *Godwheel* features characters from *Rune*, *Freex*, *Hardcase*, *Warstrike*, and *Mantra*, and promises to "radically transform" each of them. The villains of the story are NecroMantra and Lord Pumpkin, two Ultraverse bad guys of unequaled nastiness, plus a new entry: PrimeEvil, an animated Prime skin complete with an attitude. The series will be bi-weekly, running through January and February; numbering will run #0-#3. Founding writers Mike W. Barr, James Hudnall, Gerard Jones, Chris Ulm, and Dan Danko are involved in *Godwheel*, as are artists Mark Pacella, Scott Benefiel, John Statema, Aaron Lopresti, Scott Kolins, and Jason Armstrong. Spin-offs from the series will include an *Elven* mini-series guest starring PrimeEvil by Lopresti, and a *NecroMantra/Lord Pumpkin* mini-series.

Elsewhere in the Ultraverse: Warstrike will be so changed by events in *Godwheel* that he will adopt a new identity, and the monthly title will be replaced in late spring by a series of mini-series under the title *The 'Strike*. Events unfolding in *Firearm*'s "The Rafferty Saga" will have a profound effect upon Firearm. Writer James Robinson is leaving the title with issue #18, and indications are that Alec Swan, AKA Firearm, will depart as well. The focus will apparently shift to various agents operating under the official designation "Codename: Firearm." Robinson fans shouldn't despair, though, because there are also reports that he'll be doing additional Swan stories—in the form of mini-series—at some point in the future. More definite is his agreement

Lord Pumpkin, PrimeEvil, NecroMantra, and Rune are the stars of Malibu's *Godwheel*.

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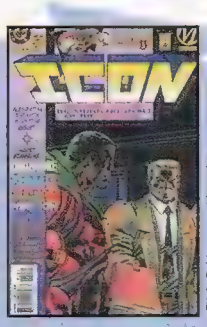
Marvel's editor-in-chief; now five editorial directors

18 DC/Malibu *Star Trek: TNG/Star Trek: DSN* crossover begins

TM & © Paramount Pictures



TM & © Milestone Media Inc

- 100th Milestone book, *Icon* #20
- *Spawn* #19 finally ships, out of sequence
- *Team 7* #1, and #1A, final WildStorm variant

27 WDRE "Shriek of the Week"—Veruca Salt's "Seether"

29 Major auction of comics at Christie's in New York

NOVEMBER

1 Marvel Select's *Tales of Suspense*
- *Spawn* #20 finally ships
- *X-O Manowar*'s "Wolfbridge Affair" begins—#37
- J. Quesada and J. Palmiotti's *Ash* #1—first Event comic

2 Marvel acquires Malibu Comics

8 *Rogue* #1
- Tekno • Comix line debuts with *Mr. Hero—The Newmatic Man* and *Primortals*

15 Hulk reverts back to savage form—#425
- Frank Miller's *Sin City: The Big Fat Kill* #1

18 *Star Trek: Generations* film released

22 Croo's final issue at Marvel—#120

29 *Swamp Thing* hits #150
- *Silver Surfer* reaches #100
- *Shaman's Tears* returns to Image, with #3

DECEMBER

6 DC's *Babylon 5* #1
- Cap story ends in #436
- Marvel Select's *Strange Tales*
- Croo wanders to Image, with #1

13 Return of Bruce as Bats, new costume—*Batman* #515
- Wolvie returns to X-Men—*Wolverine* #90
- *Barbie* #50
- *The Visitor* #1

20 *Azrael* #1
- *Angela* #1, by Neil Gaiman & Greg Capullo
- *The Destroyer* #0

27 Professor X dies, X-history altered—*X-Men: Alpha* #1

—Marc Wilkofsky

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WHAT HAPPENED TO 1994'S MISFIRES.

CONTINUITY COMICS

Continuity's plans for 1994 were largely derailed when the company officially went on a publishing hiatus this summer. *Shaman* #0 was one of the few books from the "Rise of Magic" crossover to see print, and the eight-issue "Rise of the God King" plotted by Jim Shooter for *Megalith* was not released. Plans for the line, and the Curious imprint that Continuity intended to launch, have been shelved indefinitely.

DARK HORSE COMICS

Frank Miller and Geof Darrow's *The Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot*, a Legend mini-series originally set for last spring, is set for release in spring 1995...Another Legend title, *Monkeyman and O'Brien* by Art Adams, has been scheduled for the summer. The title characters of the four-issue mini-series are a super-strong Earth woman and a super-smart gorilla-like alien...James O'Barr's 12-issue series *Cothik* is tentatively planned for mid-year release as well; the series is described by O'Barr as "*Blade Runner* meets *The Wizard of Oz*," and is currently being optioned as a film.

DC COMICS

Several possible projects considered for 1994 release have not yet been scheduled. This includes a *Vengeance of Bane II* one-shot, a "World's Finest: Next Generation"-type team-up of Superboy and Robin, and a Nightwing mini-series...*Jonah Hex: Riders of the Worm and Such*, a five-issue sequel to the *Two-Gun Mojo* Vertigo mini-series, will begin in January from Joe R. Lansdale and Tim Truman...Other Vertigo projects remain under consideration, but are not presently scheduled: *Chiaroscuro*, a Leonardo da Vinci book by Dave Rosen; *Blood and Shadows*, a horror book by Lansdale and Mark A. Nelson; *Rites of Alchemy*, by Dick Foreman and Dave Johnson; and *Coddess*, a Garth Ennis-penned book.

IMAGE COMICS

Coming from Jim Valentino's Shadowline Ink studio is *Galactic Legion*, an ongoing series set to begin in summer 1995. The series, written and penciled by Valentino, lets him do to the Image Universe what he did to the Marvel Universe in *Guardians of the Galaxy*. In *Galactic Legion*, a 30th century super-team is formed to provide protection and commerce within the galaxy. Members include Alpha, the female leader; Dr. Infinity, a mysterious mentalist; Militia, a diminutive prankster; and Syphon, a power absorber...*The Knight*, an Extreme Studios title also planned for the Cosmic Images line of outer space books, has been indefinitely postponed. The book was to spotlight a Major Ironside-led team...The third of the planned Cosmic books, *Weapon Zero* from Top Cow Productions, will premiere in early 1995. The mini-series is about a group of Earth children abducted by aliens long ago and kept in hibernation on the moon. It will be written by Walt Simonson with the art team of Joe Benitez and Matt Banning...Another Top Cow project, a three-issue *Ripclaw* mini-series, is planned for early 1995, with Eric Silvestri as writer and Brandon Peterson (not Greg Capullo, as originally announced) handling the art...A *Cyblade* one-shot, written by Marc Silvestri and illustrated by Benitez and Banning, has been completed for release this December.

TM & © Daniel Brereton

Bravura's *The Nocturnals* bumped to '95.

MALIBU COMICS

Two of Malibu's creator-owned Bravura titles planned for 1994 will hit the stands by the spring. *The Nocturnals*, a mini-series from Dan Brereton, has been rescheduled for a January premiere. The storyline has been described as a crossbreeding of the books of Ray Bradbury, Philip K. Dick, and H.P. Lovecraft. The story starts when Doc Horror inadvertently looses demons upon his home planet before escaping to Earth. The Nocturnals are a team formed to prevent Earth from a similar fate. Beginning in March, *Metaphysique* is another Bravura book, written and illustrated by Norm Breyfogle, about a metaphysically inspired super-sorcerer. Dan Jurgens's *Deuce*, also planned for 1994, is no longer being published by Malibu, but by another publisher yet to be determined.

MARVEL COMICS

Comic Book, a nine-by-12-inch book by John Kricfalusi's Spumco Studio, has been set for a 1995 release. The comic features characters like Jimmy the Hapless Boy, Hee-Hah the Atomic Pig, and George Liquor...No date has been set yet for *The Intruders*, a mini-series about the superpowered members of Cable's Six Pack, but it is planned for the coming year...Following on the heels of *Prince Valiant* will be three more limited series based on the King Features characters. *The Phantom*, a four-issue title, begins in December '94 from creators Dave DeVries and Glenn Lumsden, followed in early '95 by *Mandrake*, written by Mike Barr, and *Flash Gordon*, with art by Al Williamson.

TOPPS COMICS

Fans who liked the one-shot *Exo Squad* #0 will want to hunt down a 1995 mini-series based on the Saturday morning cartoon. The series will be written by Len Wein, penciled by Joe Staton, and inked by Steve Montano, with Michael Golden covers.

VALIANT

The *Turok* #0 one-shot has been tentatively set for July 1995. Rather than being issued in conjunction with a trade paperback or in some other format, the #0 issue will be a regular release.

—Rogers Cadenhead

to script issues #8-#10 of *UltraForce*, Malibu's new super-team title. George Pérez has committed to stay on as artist of that title through issue #12.

The stars of *Freex* will try to survive a crossover visit from Rune, then embark on a new adventure that will lead to a next generation of Freex. Over in *Hardcase*, the hero gets a new costume and a new villain, someone closer to him than anyone will expect. Creator/writer Jim Hudnall promises to turn Hardcase's world completely upside-down.

One of the characters most profoundly affected by *Godwheel* will be Mantra. Lukasz will finally get his male body, and *Mantra* will now star Eden Blake in the title role. Mike Barr and new penciler Jason Armstrong indicate that her life will be undergoing some "even stranger changes." Hard to imagine.

The Night Man will feature a black leather-clad Rhiannon, acting more vicious than ever. Writer Steve Englehart remains at the helm of the Ultraverse's night warrior. Steve Erwin will do art for at least four issues of *Prime*, and the likes of Rogue Prime and Turbo will be stirring things up for the Ultraverse strongman; while Norm Breyfogle will be returning to do some work on Ultraverse titles, it appears that *Prime* will not necessarily be included among his tasks. Coming up in *Rune*, Gemini—the boy who saves Rune's life, after the title character meets his match in *Godwheel*—will learn that he received a dark gift, and a heritage, from the energy vampire. *Sludge* becomes a series of mini-series and special editions with December's *Sludge: Red X-Mas*, with art by Mike Ploog, who collaborated with creator Steve Gerber on a legendary run of Marvel's *Man-Thing*. Another one-shot, *Sludge: Swamp of Souls*, is next on the schedule.

Solitaire will shift to an ongoing mini-series format as well, after issue #12. *Solitaire: The Perfect Man* is first on the new schedule, co-

written by Gerard Jones and Julie Hoffman, with art by Jeff Parker. There will be a membership change for *The Strangers*, as a direct result of what happens in December and in the title's December annual. In *Prototype*, the first Ultra-baby may be on the way, but 18-year-old mom-to-be Angella, Jimmy Ruiz's girlfriend, is getting nervous. *Wrath* ends with a bang as of issue #9, following a storyline in which the hero goes rogue to seek the Ultra who crippled his father and ends up with all of Aladdin after him; Mantra, Warstrike, and Prime guest star in this David Ammerman, Mike Barr, and Rodney Gates production.

New to the Ultraverse lineup this spring will be the ongoing monthly, *The Eliminator*, written by Hank Kanalz and Roland Mann, with art by Mike Zeck. The character debuts this December in the flip-book series *Ultraverse Premiere*, which will continue to be a showcase for new characters, and provide an additional outlet for stories of existing ones. Features by Dan Mishkin, Jan Duursema, Paris Cullins, Jonathan Peterson, and Walter and Louise Simonson are on tap in 1995.

As stated above, the Ultraverse/DC Comics crossover project is being planned.

Malibu's creator-owned Bravura imprint will kick off 1995 with a bang in January as Daniel Brereton's *The Nocturnals* starts its six-issue run. Brereton will write and do fully painted art for the series. Tentatively scheduled for April release is Norm Breyfogle's *Metaphysique*, a four-issue mini-series; Breyfogle took a hiatus from *Prime* to write and draw this series. A new Howard Chaykin series, titled *The Life and Times of Forever Maelstrom*—the tale of a big-game hunter who's dragged through time by Eli, a time-traveling timber wolf—is to debut in March. Although a Malibu policy says every Bravura title must have at least two issues in-house and ready to go before publication is scheduled, there's a good bet that a third *'Breed* mini-series will appear in the fall. Further Bravura books will undoubtedly be on the schedule.

The big news from the licensing department is the two-part debut of *Star Trek: Voyager* in January. Issues A and B will adapt the syndicated TV pilot, which also airs that month. The regular series will begin with issue #1 in February and will feature original stories. No creative team has been announced.

With two successful *Mortal Kombat* mini-series (*Blood & Thunder* and *Goro: Prince of Pain*) and an annual already on the stands, Malibu will continue its publishing plans for that title, as well as for *BattleTech*, which kicks off this December with a six-issue mini-series, *BattleTech: Fallout*, and will tie in with the animated TV series. Each title will have an ongoing storyline told in a regular interval of mini-series, while individual story arcs will appear in other periodic mini-series.

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Kiss Marvel's X-Men good-bye!

Marvel Comics

The major news at Marvel Comics centers around the X-titles, as is often the case. The Big Event begins in January, marked by the replacement of all the existing X-books with new titles such as *Amazing X-Men*, *Astonishing X-Men*, *Weapon X*, *X-Calibre*, and others. All these titles, which reflect an alternate reality created after Legion goes back into the past to murder Magneto, accidentally kills his father Charles Xavier, and prevents Xavier's formation of the X-Men, will begin with #1 issues.

This all begins with *X-Men: Alpha* #1, shipping in the last week of December. An in-depth story on page 24 provides the details behind this unusual storyline. It will last for four months and may have permanent repercussions in the Marvel Universe. [For the full scoop behind Marvel's plans for the X-Men, see "After Xavier..." on page 24.]

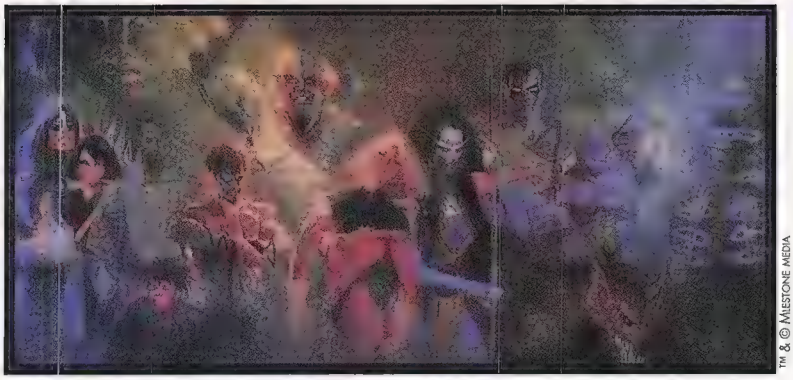
Because Marvel works around quarterly sales and editorial presentations rather than annual ones, as do the other major publishers, the information available at this writing about other 1995 plans is sketchy at best. Two flagship Marvel books reach the impressive 400th issue level in 1995: *Amazing Spider-Man* in February and *Fantastic Four* in March. It seems a bit early for the clone storyline to be resolved in *ASM*, but you have to think that the "Scarlet Spider" nom de plume does have a real superhero ring to it, doesn't it? New title, anyone? As for the buffeted and beset *Fantastic Four*, Marvel spokespersons assure us that "Reed Richards will definitely not return in issue #400," so how that anniversary will be marked is anybody's guess. *Our* guess is that it will revolve around Lyja: either a revelation about her child, or a "remarriage" between her and Johnny. It is also unclear whether *FF* writer and former Marvel editor-in-chief Tom DeFalco will remain with the title.

Two other milestone issues due in the coming year are *Punisher* #100 in January, and *Wolverine* #100 in October. The latter is too far in the future to even hazard a guess, but all the *Punisher* titles will be getting new logos and cover designs in December and January, and the female Punisher debuts this December in *Punisher War Journal* #75, so it looks like Frank Castle's long and bloody run may be drawing to a close.

Other bits and pieces: Marvel's retailer solicitations indicate that *Doom 2099* #26, which releases just prior to Christmas, "begins big changes for the 2099 Universe." Everyone is wondering where *Captain Amer-*

ica goes from here in the aftermath of the year-long "Fighting Chance" storyline, ending in December's *Cap* #436. *Dr. Strange* #75, in January, will reveal the *new* Sorcerer Supreme. And The Kingpin is back to plague Daredevil, it seems.

Finally, whether or not the eagerly awaited *Marvels II* will make the 1995 schedule is still an open question. The series, to be written by Chuck Dixon and painted by Tristan Schane, is—according to Dixon—about "the darkening of the Marvel Universe, from the inception of the Punisher, to the appearance of the new Ghost Rider, as seen through the eyes of a rookie New York City cop, as he goes through his career from beat cop to detective."



TM & © MILESTONE MEDIA

Milestone digs in for "A Long Hot Summer."

Out of the Game

A LOOK AT THE PUBLISHERS WHO CLOSED UP SHOP IN 1994.

1994 was not a good year to start a comic book company, it would seem. At least four publishers who opened their doors this year closed them as well—one, before it even got a title onto the stands.

The biggest news was the collapse of Defiant, Jim Shooter's attempt to get back into the publishing game after leaving Valiant. Defiant ceased all operations at the end of August. According to Defiant's director of marketing and sales, Clark Smith, the end came when a $3 million financing deal fell through. Shooter is said to be looking for new financing in the hopes of taking Defiant out of hiatus.

The other major publisher to shut its doors in 1994 was Innovation, which actually went out of business on the last day of 1993. According to former editor-in-chief George Broderick, one of Innovation's original investors called in his loan as the only secured creditor. "[The investor] took over the assets, including ownership of *Hero Alliance* and *Power Factor*." Innovation also held licenses for a number of properties, including Anne Rice's vampire novels, *Lost in Space*, and TV's *Beauty and the Beast*. Actor and writer Bill Mumy reportedly has a commitment from Viacom for *Lost in Space*, but the status of the other properties is unknown.

Larry Stroman and Todd Johnson started Axis Comics after their project, *Tribe*, got the boot from Image Comics. Professional and creative differences led to a breakup of the Stroman/Johnson team, and Axis stopped spinning in June. *Tribe*'s status is unknown, but most of the other projects announced from Axis—especially those not created by Stroman and/or Johnson—are being shopped around to other publishers. One such title, *Shaman's Tears* by Mike Grell, is returning to Image.

Silver Moon Comics made a big splash at the Chicago Comics Con with the announcement that Harlan Ellison would be developing projects for the fledgling publisher, a subsidiary of the direct-to-video film studio Full Moon Entertainment. The splash became a gurgle in September, when Full Moon ran into financial trouble, and as a consequence, dropped plans for a comics line.

Another short-lived publisher was Ominous Press, founded by fan-favorite artist Bart Sears. At the end of September, Ominous informed readers, retailers, and distributors that it was suspending operations "for an indefinite period of time." Sears blamed the company's failure on a "difficult comic book market" that did not allow the publisher to "fulfill the goals we had set for...ourselves." After its October releases, Ominous canceled all orders and solicitations.

After significant start-up problems, including the resignation of publisher Valarie Jones (taking the "Legacy" universe with her) and the reported loss of an NFL Players Association license, Majestic Entertainment seems to have disappeared as well, though its parent company, Triple A, said in February that the comics line will eventually get back on track.

Eclipse Comics, one of the oldest independent publishers, has apparently suspended comics publishing, in the wake of personal and financial problems for publisher Dean Mullaney. The company has reportedly decided to concentrate on non-comics projects, including trading cards. The status of its properties is largely unknown; the rights to *Miracleman* are reportedly held by a number of entities, including Eclipse, current creative team Neil Gaiman and Mark Buckingham, and British publishers Dez Skinn and Mick Anglo. There have been feelers from other publishers about acquiring the *Miracleman* rights, but any deal would have to await a settlement among the current owners.

The status of a couple of other small publishers seems very up in the air. Freelancers have been reporting an inability to contact Dagger Comics, including reports of the publisher's phone lines being disconnected in July. Similarly, attempts to reach Triumphant Comics have also failed; reportedly letters, faxes, and phone calls to their offices went unanswered in July.

Neal Adams's Continuity Comics is reported to be alive and well, although it is well behind schedule. The company had announced it would resume solicitations this past April, but there's been nothing from the publisher since that time.

—Patrick Daniel O'Neill

Milestone Media

Milestone Media has a full plate for 1995, including a major summer crossover event that will launch a new monthly title, special anniversary celebrations of the 25th issue of its four flagship titles, five mini-series featuring favorite characters from the regular titles, and several licensing agreements that should help the company maintain its steady growth pattern.

The crossover event, "The Long Hot Summer," will run through all seven ongoing titles and lay the groundwork for *Shiver*, to be written by Sarah Byam (*Black Canary*). Civil unrest and riots hit the city of Dakota in a storyline which concentrates on the sorts of problems that super-heroics can't readily solve. As the tale unfolds, Shiver and Singe, the two female characters who will be featured in the new title, are introduced into the Dakota Universe.

Highlighting the ongoing titles will be extra-sized anniversary issues of *Blood Syndicate*, *Hardware*, *Icon*, and *Static*, each with a metallic cover. In January, *Hardware* #25 will resolve the Hardware/Alva relationship and mark a big change in continuity. In February, *Blood Syndicate* #25 rearranges the membership of the popular team. Come March, Rocket will find someone else to carry on as Icon, now that the original has left the planet. (Rocket's long, long pregnancy will come to an end this month, by the way.) Then, in May, there'll be no turning back for Static—a special story marks a turning point in his life.

In the other current monthlies, Kobalt, in his title, will continue to teach Page how to be a superhero; *Shadow Cabinet* will feature Dharma coming to grips with the limits of his powers, plus the ever-popular change in membership; and *Xombi* will shed some light on the strange events from its issue #0. Look for Milestone to repeat its "cover month" promotion as well, with Kent Williams and Howard Chaykin reportedly signed on.

Mini-series for 1995 include: *Holocaust* by Ivan Velez Jr., Tommy Lee Edwards, and Steve Mitchell (which starts in December); *Wise Son: The White Wolf*, written and illustrated by Ho Che Anderson, beginning in March;

TM & © Tekno•Comix

Tekno•Comix's Mr. Hero spotlights Neil Gaiman's obsolete superhero.

Technique, by Jo Duffy and Colleen Doran, starting in April; and two unscheduled series for the fall: *Iron Butterfly* by Erica Helene, with an art team to be announced, and *Fade* by Velez, Jr. and penciler Chriscross.

Milestone expects to announce a major licensing agreement with a clothing manufacturer in the spring, and will debut *Milestone for Kids* as a one-shot magazine for younger readers from Welsh Publishing in February. Work is in progress on a second SkyBox card set for the summer, with artwork from Kent Williams, George Pratt, Gil Ashby, and Bill Sienkiewicz, among others.

Tekno•Comix

The first monthly titles from Tekno•Comix launched late this year. *Primortals*, created by Leonard Nimoy and set at the time of man's first contact with alien beings, is written by Kate Worley, with art by Scot Eaton and Mike Barreiro. *Mr. Hero—The Newmatic Man* is a Neil Gaiman creation about an obsolete mechanical man who may be Earth's best hope against the threat of the Teknophage, an evil dinosaur-like entity who seeks to conquer the planet. SF author Jack Vance wrote the first issue, with art by Ted Slampyak and Bob McLeod. Both debuted in November. *Lost Universe*, characterized as Gene Roddenberry's final creation, is set in the 40th century following a massive interstellar war, where a group of explorers are attempting to bring the human race back together. It should be out in the stores in December, with a script by science fiction writer Lawrence Watt-Evans.

Definitely planned for release in 1995, *Mike Danger*, a monthly title which takes Mickey Spillane's '50s private eye and transplants him to the year 2045 (he was trapped in a chemically-supported hibernation chamber by an escaped Nazi war criminal back in 1950, it seems), will appear in the first quarter of the year. The feature was also launched as a weekly comic strip this past September as part of Spillane's unique agreement with Tekno•Comix. Max Allan Collins is the writer, with pencils by Keith Giffen, and inks by Mike Barreiro.

Other titles under consideration for monthly status are still indefinite. Among them: *Teknophage*, Rick Veitch's take on the villain from *Mr. Hero*; *Mullkon Empire*, the story of a villainous family who turned their planet into a waste dump for the galaxy, developed by historical fiction and fantasy novelist John Jakes; and an unnamed science fiction and fantasy series developed by novelists Isaac Asimov (who was on the board of directors of BIG, the company that owns Tekno•Comix, prior to his death) and Anne McCaffrey.

Topps Comics

The folks at Topps Comics are justly proud of having snared one of the cult hits of the 1994 TV season as a monthly book. *The X-Files* will launch in either January or February as an ongoing series featuring original stories starring the X-File team of FBI agents Scully and Mulder.

Topps will also give a three-issue miniseries spotlight to Lady Rawhide, the *Zorro* supporting character who became an immediate fan favorite. It begins in January and will be handled by two members of the *Zorro* creative team—writer Don McGregor and penciler Mike Mayhew—and an inker to be announced. The main title will go on hiatus during *Lady Rawhide*'s run.

Having learned that beautiful, scantily clad women sell comics, Topps will do a *Barbi Twins* one-shot, aimed to be on the market for Valentine's Day. It will feature the *Playboy* models—stars of one of the best-selling calendars in years—in a lead story that should be a fantastic adventure much along the lines of Dark Horse's *The Dirty Pair*, as well as a satirical back-up feature. The creative team is still to be announced.

Topps Comics opens the *X-Files*.

TM & © Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation

Elsewhere in the Topps Universe, "hiatus" is in vogue. The company won't commit, but there's a good chance that *Jurassic Park*-related titles will return in the spring, with a fresh new approach and new creative team. The entire Kirbyverse is on hold indefinitely; one option being explored is a crossover with another publisher.

Valiant

The expected impact of the acquisition of Valiant's parent company, Voyager Communications, by Acclaim Entertainment will probably not be fully felt until late 1995, when the Turok/Rai video game, the first one developed for the Nintendo 64 platform, hits the market. The underlying effect of the new ownership, however, combined with the sales impetus generated by this past summer's company-wide crossover, "The Chaos Effect," has the Valiant folks raring to go.

Things kick off in January in the pages of *Bloodshot* and *Secret Weapons*. As part of an ongoing storyline called "Bloodshot Rampage," the nanite-powered hero turns evil when his memory of being programmed as the ultimate killing machine is restored. His title goes bi-weekly for the first month to kick off the story, and Bloodshot will certainly be quite an active character in the Valiant Universe for the first quarter of the year, as this twist of fate puts him into conflict with several other heroes. Kevin VanHook writes, and Sean Chen provides the art for the title.

In a three-issue storyline entitled "The Harbinger Wars," scheduled to begin in February's *Timewalker* #7, Ivar finds himself in the near future, involved in events first hinted at in *Rai* #0. February is also Ninjak Month at Valiant, with *Ninjak* #0 written and drawn by Mark Moretti, and a second *Ninjak Yearbook* by a team yet to be announced. Moretti spent six weeks traveling in Tokyo and London to get background material for #0.

In March, *Secrets of the Valiant Universe* #4 introduces a new character, the Outcast, into the Valiant Universe. That same month, in the pages of *Turok*, the title character returns to his original stomping ground, the Lost Land, which was recreated as part of the Chaos Effect saga. He is expected to stay there for the foreseeable future. A *Turok* #0 issue is scheduled for July, which, more than likely, will tell the story of how Turok went from the Old West to the Lost Land. In *Timewalker* #0, an April release, writer Bob Hall reveals a lot of secrets about what's going on in the Valiant timeline. A month later, Mark Moretti begins a summer-long mini-series currently called *The Time Capsule*, which also deals with time, although without the luxury of time travel.

There will be a major event next summer revealing the Visitor's true story, following up on the recent two-issue mini-series centering around the powerful, mysterious figure introduced during "The Chaos Effect."

™ & © Voyager Communications Inc.

Bloodshot vs. the rest of Valiant. January '95.

Finally, in response to fan demands, Valiant will begin a regular reprinting program for the best of the original Western Publishing books, including *Magnus, Solar*, and *Turok*. These reformatted and recolored reprints will feature new covers by Rick Leonardi and Dick Giordano, Paul Smith, and Rags Morales, respectively.

Well, that's all we know for now. But stay tuned as the news trickles in each month. See ya in '95! ☆

Jack Curtin, a freelancer based in Philadelphia, Pa., has seen the future, and he's not so sure it works.

THE COMIC WORLD MOURNS ITS LOSSES FROM 1994.

Comics fans will have to hope that 1995 is not as sad a year as 1994. This year saw the loss of a surprising number of industry professionals, including, of course, Jack Kirby and Don Thompson.

JACK KIRBY died on February 6 of heart failure at the age of 76. Creator and co-creator of so many comic book characters it's impossible to name them all (Captain America, the Fantastic Four, Hulk, X-Men, Thor—the list seems literally endless), he was also responsible—with partner Joe Simon—for the popularity of two entire genres of comics: romance and kid gangs.

He was appropriately called the "King" of comics...and there will never be another.

DON THOMPSON, co-editor of *Comics Buyer's Guide*, died on May 23 of congestive heart failure. He was 58. In addition to his 10-year stint editing *CBG* with his wife Maggie, Thompson was one of the founders of modern comics fandom. The Thompsons produced some of the earliest comics fanzines, including *Comic Art* and *Newfangles*. With Dick Lupoff, Thompson edited *All in Color for a Dime*, a collection of essays about comics and one of the primary works of comics history.

As creator Peter David put it, Thompson "valued comics and their history, the people who created them, and their continued promise as an art form."

One comics publisher and family lost two founders in 1994. **VICKI HARVEY**, CEO of Lorne-Harvey Publications, died March 15 at the age of 62. Her company, organized in 1988, reissued material originally published by Harvey Comics, founded by her husband, Alfred Harvey. Most of the assets of Harvey Comics were acquired by Jeffrey Montgomery in 1989.

Then, on July 4, **ALFRED HARVEY** himself died at the age of 80. Harvey was credited with the creation of the Black Cat (the Harvey version), Richie Rich, Hot Stuff, and Wendy the Good Little Witch, among others.

Many other men and women with connections to comics died in 1994 as well. Among them are:

NEAL POZNER, who died June 21 at the age of 38. Pozner, an editor at DC Comics, was an award-winning designer and art director.

MURRAY BOLTINOFF, who was 83 when he died March 6, and was an editor at DC Comics from the '40s through the '80s, notably on titles such as *Doom Patrol, Challengers of the Unknown*, and *The Brave and the Bold*.

DOUG WILDEY, best known as the creator of Jonny Quest, who died October 5. In addition to his animation work, Wildey drew *Outlaw Kid* for Marvel, *Tarzan* and various movie adaptations for Gold Key/Dell, and his own western strip, *Rio*, for a number of publishers. He was 72.

ZACK MOSLEY, creator of the newspaper comic strip *Smilin' Jack*, passed away December 21, 1993, at the age of 87.

BUD SAGENDORF, longtime *Popeye* artist who took over the strip from creator E.C. Segar in 1938, died September 22 at the age of 79.

WALTER LANTZ died March 21 at the age of 93. He is best known as the creator of Woody Woodpecker and Andy Panda, and for hosting the syndicated *Woody Woodpecker Show* on TV throughout the 1950s.

CHARLES PARIS, who died at 82 on March 19, was one of the many uncredited artists who worked on the *Batman* strip for DC Comics and Bob Kane throughout the 1940s and '50s.

FRANK WELLS, president and COO of the Walt Disney Co., died in a plane crash on April 3 at the age of 62.

CESAR ROMERO, the actor who played the Joker in the 1960s *Batman* TV series, died January 2 at the age of 86.

OLAN SOULE, the voice of Batman on the animated series in the 1960s and '70s, was 84 when he died February 1.

JACK HANNAH, director of more than 100 Donald Duck cartoons, passed away June 11 at the age of 81.

WILLIAM CONRAD, best known as TV's Cannon, but also the narrator for *Rocky and His Friends*, was 73 when he died February 11.

—Patrick Daniel O'Neill

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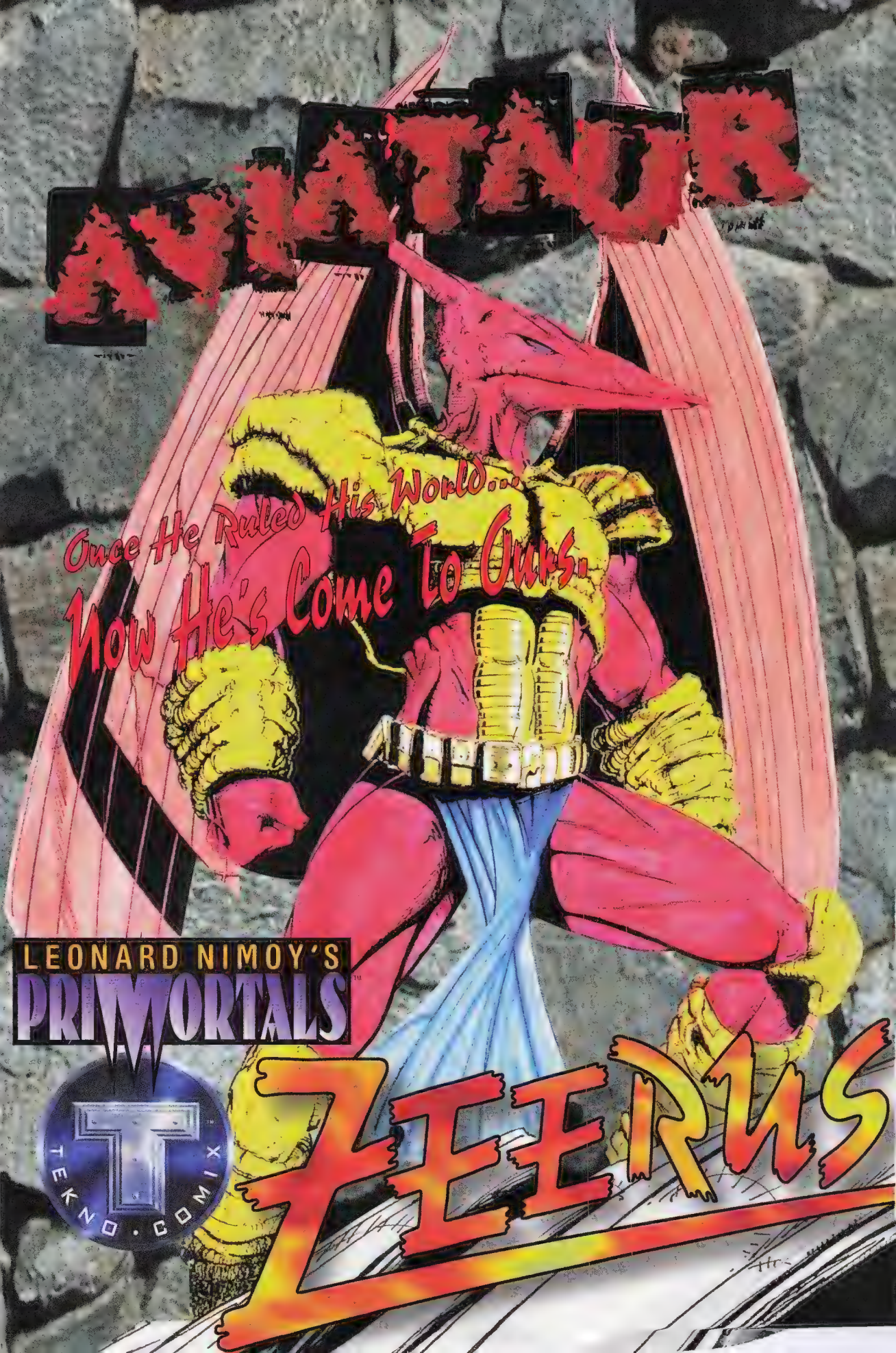
DC
THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS EVERY MONTH IN
BATMAN™ SHADOW OF THE BAT™ DETECTIVE COMICS™ ROBIN™


AVIATOR
Once He Ruled His World...
Now He's Come To Ours.
LEONARD NIMOY'S
PRIMORTALS
TEKNO·COMIX
ZEERUS

In a freak accident involving a son not yet born to him, Charles Xavier died before he ever formed the X-Men. The X-Men...peace between mutants and humans...a beacon of hope for an entire race...none of them ever happened.

They were all a dream.

PRESENTING THE ALL-NEW, ALL DIFFERENT
X-MEN

AFTER XAVIER: THE AGE OF APOCALYPSE

THE AMAZING X-MEN
(FORMERLY X-MEN)

THE ASTONISHING X-MEN
(FORMERLY UNCANNY X-MEN)

WEAPON X
(FORMERLY WOLVERINE)

X-MAN
(FORMERLY CABLE)

GAMBIT AND THE X-TERNALS
(FORMERLY X-FORCE)

FACTOR X
(FORMERLY X-FACTOR)

X-CALIBRE
(FORMERLY EXCALIBUR)

GENERATION NEXT
(FORMERLY GENERATION X)

X-MEN CHRONICLES
(FORMERLY X-MEN UNLIMITED)

T+G HILDEBRANDT

MARVEL COMICS

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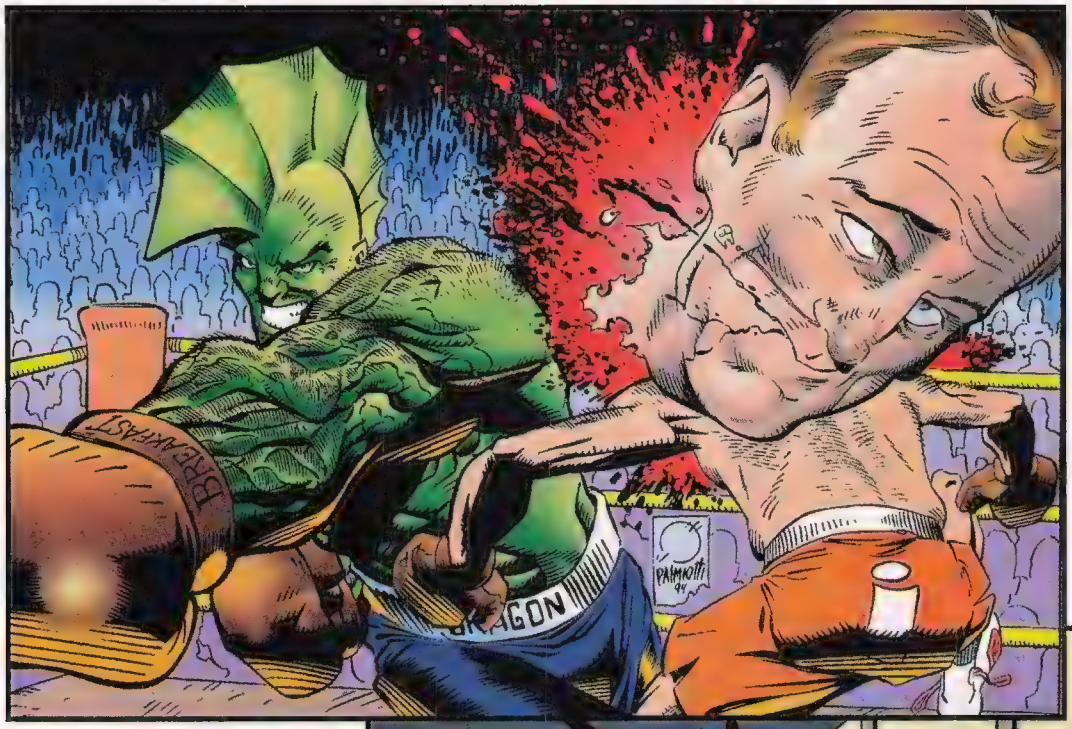
the Drawing board

A special showcase of original art by some of the comic industry's finest professionals, created exclusively for *Wizard*.



Savage Dragon ™ & © Erik Larsen

Spawn is a registered trademark of Todd McFarlane Productions. Spawn & Violator ™ & © Todd McFarlane Productions.

ZEALOT ™ & © AEGIS ENTERTAINMENT INC.

BOXING SAVAGE DRAGON BY JOE QUESADA

(ABOVE LEFT) This art was created for a line of superhero sportscards which appeared throughout the June, July, and August issues of *Wizard*'s sister publication, *Collector's Sportslook*. By the way, that's Erik Larsen that the Dragon's beatin' the crap out of. (Notice the tooth coming out of his nose. Real classy.)

HOCKEY SPAWN BY GREG CAPULLO

(AT LEFT) Yup, Spawn and Violator in another one o' them *Sportslook* hero cards. We wouldn't want to ref this match-up: *"Two-minute penalty for disemboweling!"*

SOCCER ZEALOT BY JIM LEE

(ABOVE) This was the premiere card in that very limited (three-card!) all-chromium *Sportslook* set; it featured Zealot of the WildC.A.T.s. The backs of these cards contained some pretty amusing write-ups detailing how well the character was doing in the league. If you can find 'em, they're worth givin' a once-over. Funny stuff.

John Byrne's NEXT MEN™

JOHN BYRNE'S NEXT MEN ™ & © JOHN BYRNE

UNDERSTANDING COMICS

UNDERSTANDING COMICS ™ & © SCOTT MCCLOUD

Zot! ™ & © Scott McCloud

NEXT MEN BY JOHN BYRNE

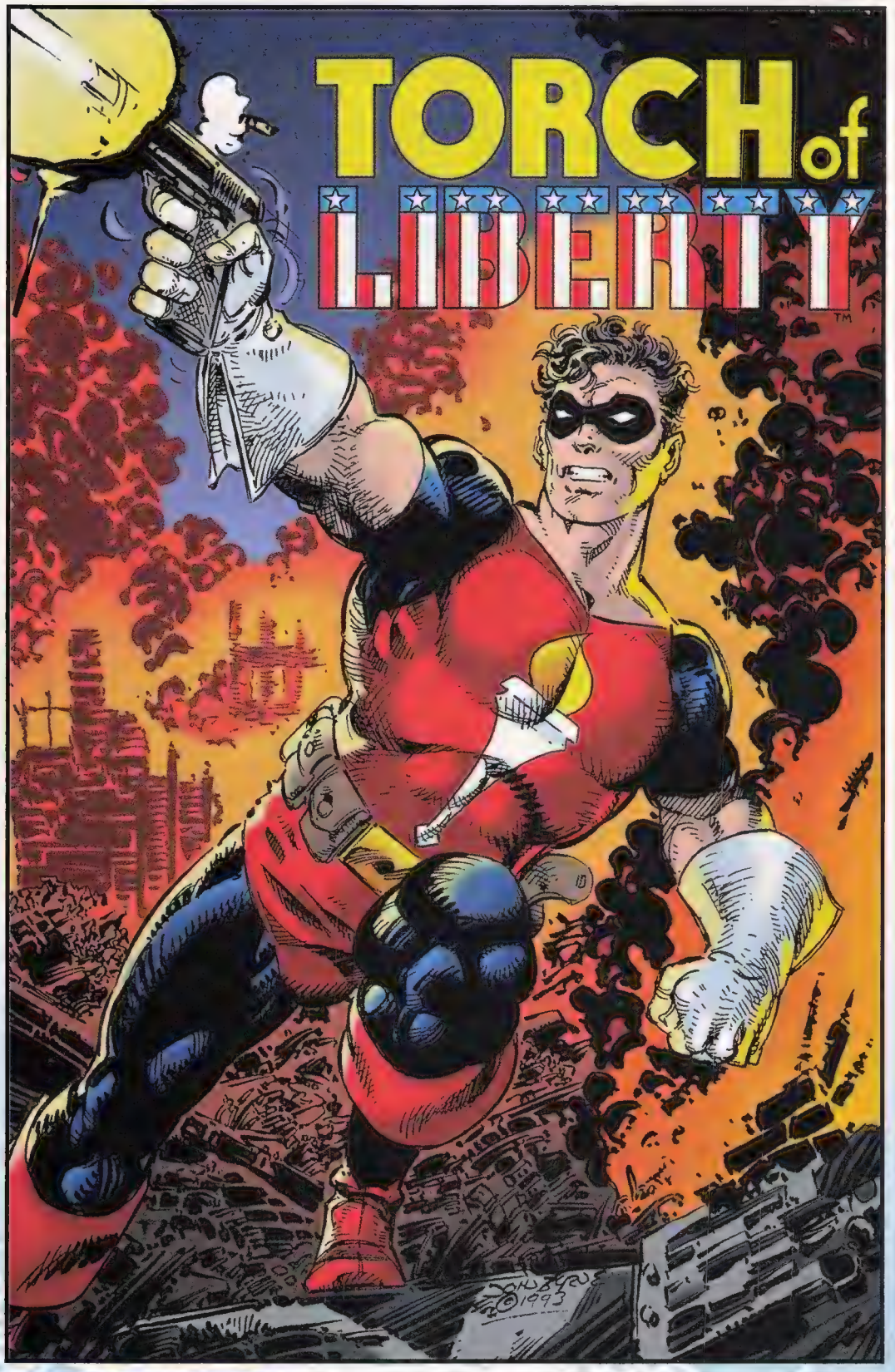
(ABOVE LEFT) More card art. This was intended to be one of our Creator Portfolio cards that debuted back in *Wizard* #30, but the cards didn't prove very popular with fans, so we discontinued 'em. Seeing as how beautiful those cards were, it's a real shame the line was discontinued.

UNDERSTANDING COMICS BY SCOTT McCLOUD

(LEFT) Another sample of Creator Portfolio card art, this time showcasing the host of Scott McCloud's award-winning book that delved into the inner mechanics of a comic book, and examined what made comics work.

ZOT! BY SCOTT McCLOUD

(ABOVE) Also from the author of *Understanding Comics*, this Creator Portfolio card art showcased McCloud's other-dimensional superhero.



TORCH OF LIBERTY BY JOHN BYRNE

Another example of the illustrious Creator Portfolio card art, this time featuring Legend's grittier version of a patriotic hero.

TORCH OF LIBERTY & GOLGOTHA™ & © JOHN BYRNE

GOLGOTHA BY JOHN BYRNE

Even more cool Creator Portfolio art. Golgotha here is the Torch of Liberty's bane, and with the exception of his fleshy right side (which kinda looks lame with a skull head and armored body), one of the coolest supervillains we've ever seen.

MAVERICK & OMEGA RED BY MARK TEXEIRA

And here we are in unused cover land. This bad boy almost saw print as the cover to *Wizard* #22, then #23, then #24... but the time just never seemed right, and eventually Maverick's popularity went piff, as did this cover.

Maverick & Omega Red ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group

BLOODSTRIKE BY DAN FRAGA

Like the Maverick cover, the timing just never seemed right on this baby.

Bloodstrike ™ & © Rob Liefeld Inc.

4

FANTASTIC FOUR BY RON LIM

Hey, the FF—neat! Yeah, but with this FF team looking nothing like the team that's hangin' out in the Baxter Building nowadays, this cover also got the axe.

Fantastic Four ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group

X-MEN BY DARICK ROBERTSON

Whoa! Why didn't we run this cover? Beats the hell out of us. Awesome art, kick-ass characters, and a Sabretooth that's two seconds away from handing you your larynx, combine to make this quite a striking piece of art.

X-Men ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group

BRUTES & BABES

DRAWING POWERFUL COMICS WITH
BART SEARS

Here we are, back at the old drawing board with another installment of Brutes and Babes. This month, I will be finishing up my three-part, in-depth look at anatomy in comics, dealing with more complex issues of anatomy. Hopefully, all of you have been working on a good, basic understanding of the concept of proportion and the bubble method of constructing comic figures. If you haven't gotten the hang of it yet, don't worry. This lesson will always be waiting for you when you get a chance to work more with that stuff. You should at least have an overview, though, of all of this information at the beginning of your artistic career. That way, whenever you do something new or see something different, it will ring that rusty bell, which is present in all of our heads, and you won't feel quite so lost, since you'll have seen it before.

ANATOMY 303

SECTION 1:

First off, here are some definitions of important terms that I've used in the past two issues, as well as some new terms that we'll be using this issue, such as:

Form is defined as the shape or structure of a figure, like a person. In other words, form is a general description of how a person appears.

Flow is defined in my dictionary as "to have a smooth continuity." Flow is an important element in all aspects of comics, anatomy included, because all figures must have flow. Flow creates a "sense of rightness" in an illustration. As an artist, you don't want the reader to be either confused or lost, and flow will direct the reader's eye to where it must go. Sounds easy, right?

Now I'll go back and redefine some of the terms that I used in the last two lessons on anatomy.

Anatomy, first off, is the parts of a figure, and how these parts relate physically to the other parts of the figure.

Proportion is the size relationships of the parts that appear in a figure's anatomy.

Depth describes the fact that the human figure—and almost everything else—is seen differently from different angles. This difference is due to the fact that not every side and view of an object are the same. Just about the only things that don't have depth are a featureless sphere and a point in space. Think about it, if you dare.

Muscle is an organ that is used to move parts of the body around. The muscle is flexible and can contract and twist, making it almost fluid.

Mass is the amount of matter in an object. A vague description of size might be: Space Shuttle=large mass; newt=small mass (remember?).

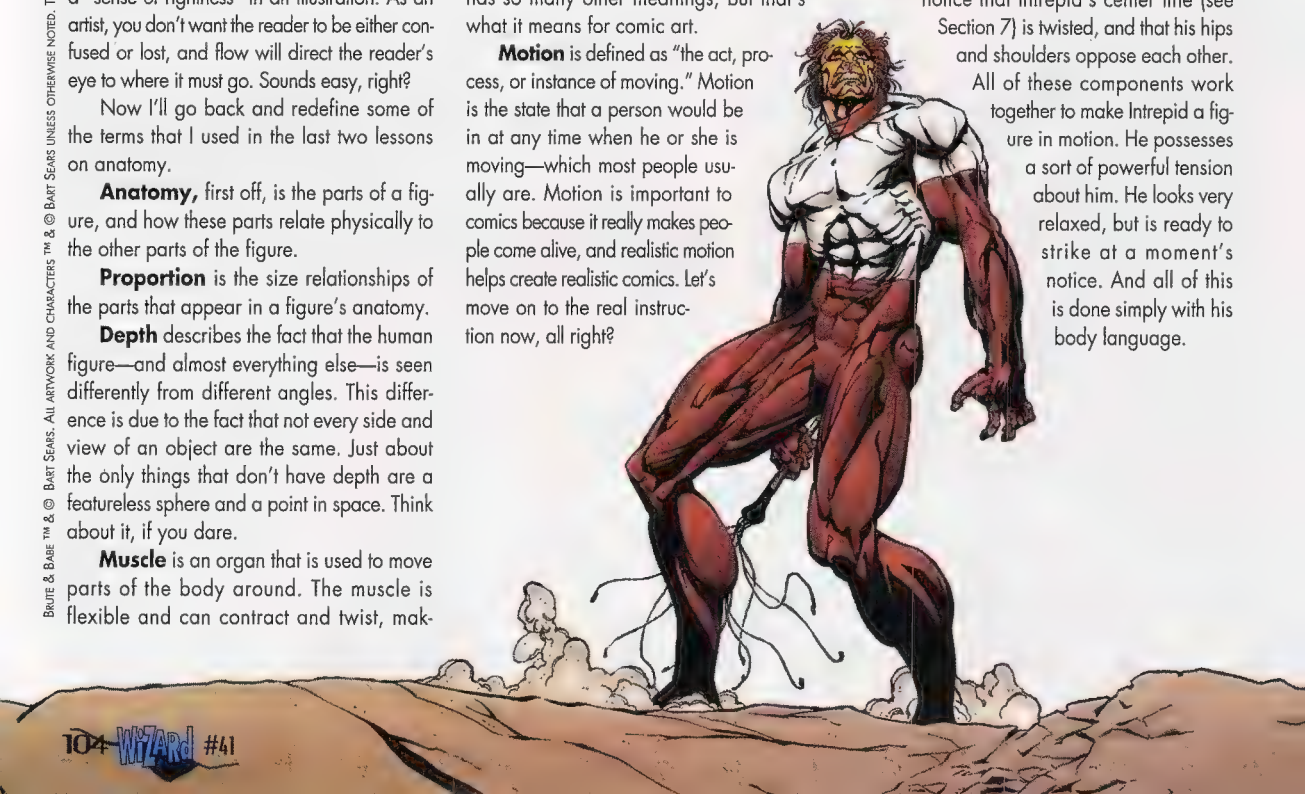
Now for the new words:

The action of **twisting** is to turn something into a spiral. A twist is a spiral curve. The ice cream in a soft ice cream cone has a twist in it, and a spiral staircase is a twisted set of stairs. This might sound funny, because "twist" has so many other meanings, but that's what it means for comic art.

Motion is defined as "the act, process, or instance of moving." Motion is the state that a person would be in at any time when he or she is moving—which most people usually are. Motion is important to comics because it really makes people come alive, and realistic motion helps create realistic comics. Let's move on to the real instruction now, all right?

SECTION 1-A:

Below is the hero Intrepid. Notice the implied motion that he possesses. What impressions do you get about his attitude and stance? Figure out which details in the drawing give you these impressions. When you're done with this, you should be able to pick out a few things. There is a definite twist to his entire body, including virtually every body part. All of the muscles flow into one another correctly, and their form and mass are consistent with everything else on the figure. Also notice that Intrepid's center line (see Section 7) is twisted, and that his hips and shoulders oppose each other. All of these components work together to make Intrepid a figure in motion. He possesses a sort of powerful tension about him. He looks very relaxed, but is ready to strike at a moment's notice. And all of this is done simply with his body language.



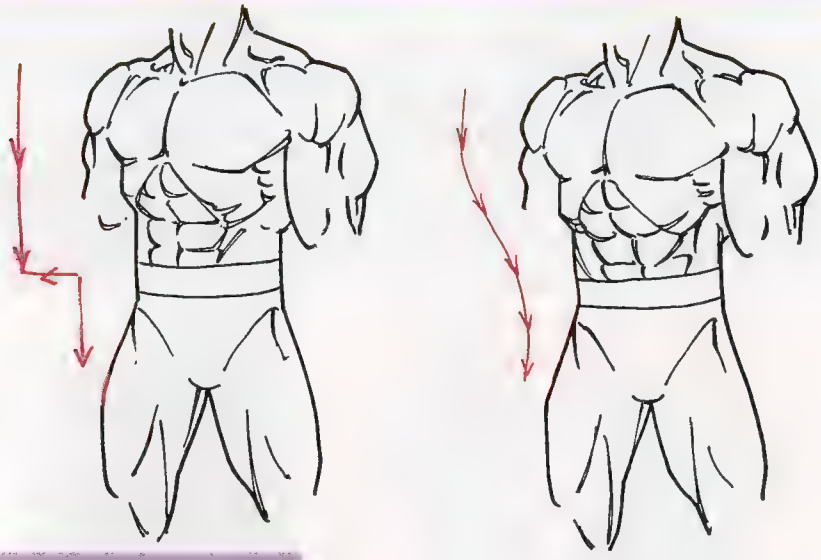
Brute & Babe ™ & © Bart Sears. All artwork and characters ™ & © Bart Sears unless otherwise noted. Text © Bart Sears.

TWIST

SECTION 2:

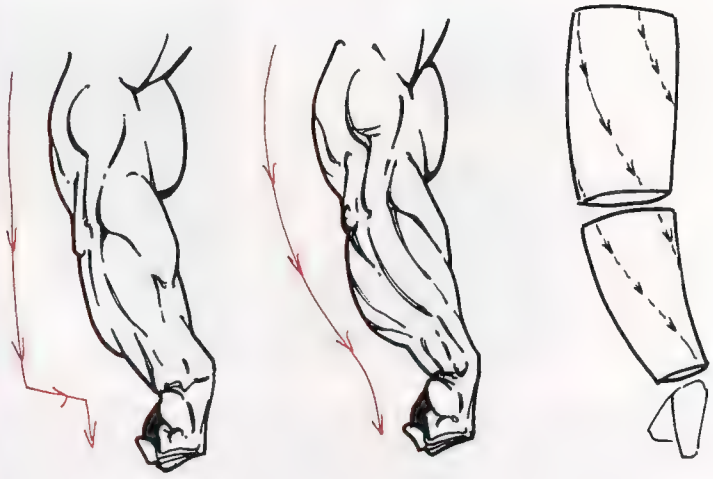
The two drawings below visually demonstrate exactly what twist means. The picture on the left shows a torso that doesn't have the correct twist to it. The person's torso looks like a plastic model of a human, with the seam at the waist. The stomach and the hips don't look connected, because the muscles of the stomach don't attach where they really would, in the hip area. The drawing on the right shows proper twist, where the muscles in the torso and hips seem to flow into one another correctly. The whole figure appears more lifelike and powerful than the figure on the left. Not only does it have correct anatomy, but it looks good. The appearance of twist in a comic figure has a great deal to do with weight distribution and motion. The way twist is shown in a figure is through the stretching and compressing of each muscle. Notice that the figure on the right has its muscles in a different position than the figure on the left, even though the underlying structures are the same in both cases. Stretching and compressing provide the actual visual display of twist. This is another stepping stone on your quest towards mastering anatomy. The relationships between muscles become very important when twisting body parts around.

The other important aspect of twist–motion is evident in everyday life. Most natural motions that humans engage in—like running, walking, or even sitting—involve twists, and so, most people have come to associate the appearance of twists in a comic as a sign of motion. Remember, motion is another one of the most important components of drawing powerful comics. A figure in motion appears to be heading somewhere, or at the very least, doing something. A sedentary superhero never won any battles!



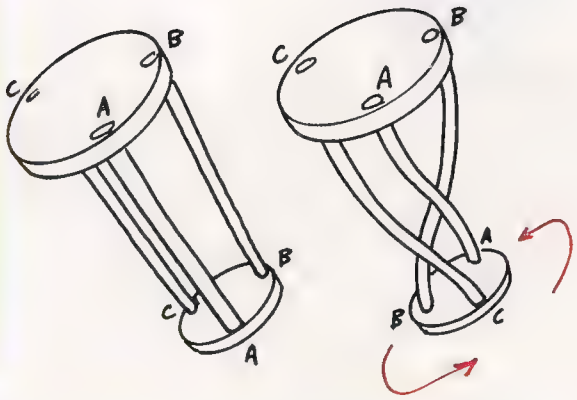
SECTION 3:

Look at the two pictures of an arm on the right. Notice that the drawing of the arm on the far left looks wrong. The arm is drawn in its most basic form, with no twist at all, but the hand looks as if it's twisted. This makes this huge arm look like it has a broken wrist—which is fine, if that's what you're trying to convey. The drawing of the arm on the right is correct, because the rest of the arm is twisted in response to the twist of the hand. Notice that the twist is most noticeable at the point where it occurs, in this case at the wrist. As you travel up the arm, there is an aftereffect to the twist—the twist gradually fades into the untwisted structure. By making everything look twisted, the arm looks more powerful as well. It's easier to see than to explain, but a solid foundation in anatomy will provide you with exactly what you need to know in order to make all of this work. The arrows that accompany the drawings should help you see this. Also, the cylinder construction shows the twist in more detail. Another important rule of thumb about twist is that twisting a joint involves at least one other joint, but flexing a joint doesn't require the motion of another joint. Flex and twist yourself around to see what I mean. It really works.



SECTION 4:

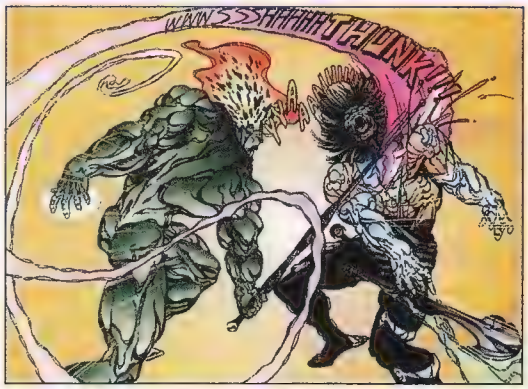
To help you out a little bit on learning how to twist and contort muscles, examine the drawings on the right. It helps to think of muscles as cables that are firmly attached at both ends to rotatable plates. Notice that rotating one of the plates causes the muscles to twist around each other—although they're still connected to the plate in which they were originally attached. See how muscle A in the diagram gets twisted around the other muscles, because it stays attached to both point A's on the two plates. The other muscles react the same way. If you were to keep twisting the same plate end, the muscles would eventually intertwine. By keeping track of this relationship, twisting muscles should no longer be such a daunting task.



MOTION

SECTION 5:

At the risk of being repetitive, motion is very important. Comic artists use motion to make figures look both athletic and powerful. The trick with motion is to make all of the figures appear alive. There is motion in everything that we do, and an artist's goal is to incorporate this motion into the drawings of the figures. Without motion, the figures would all appear wooden, much like cardboard cut-outs pasted on a page. The comic wouldn't have the appearance of tensed energy. The heroes should be close to ripping out of the frame and continuing on with whatever they were doing in real life. Make sure your figures have flow and twist, so they actually look like they're in motion. To make your figure appear like it's moving, make sure it always has proportion, depth, and good, solid anatomy. If any one of these components breaks down, the picture looks wrong and the reader won't know what to make of it. This may sound like a tall order to fill, but you can do it! If you're ever in doubt, act out what you want to show in front of a mirror, and then draw how you look. It's that simple, and it's another reason to practice life drawing. The pictures below show some examples of figures in motion...from actual, real-life comic books. Whoa!



X-O Manowar ™ & © Voyager Communications Inc.

Turok ™ & © Western Publishing Company Inc.

SECTION 6:

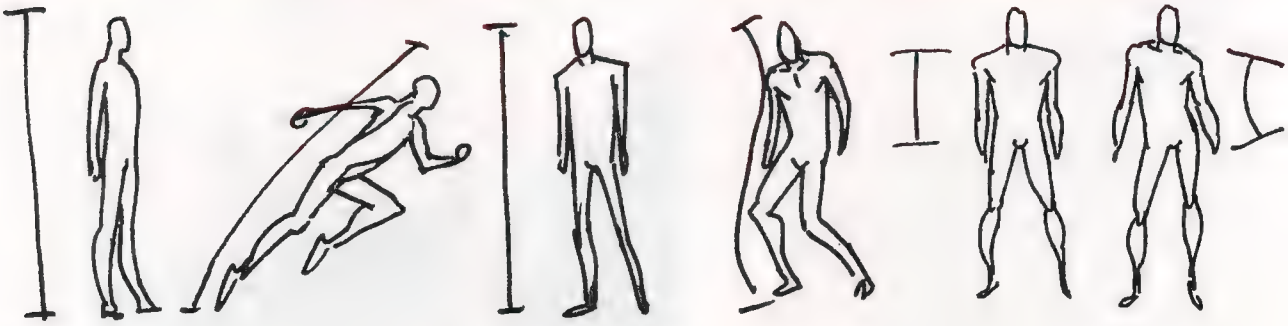
Check out the four examples of figures in motion. Look for center lines (see next section), lines of action, twist and bend, i.e. all of the things we've been dealing with. Get out your tracing paper and test out this stuff. See how it works, and see what applies and what doesn't. You have to learn to really *look* at artwork—your own as well as those of others—and be able to discern all of the things that went on from the drawing's conception all the way through to the final product. It takes time, work, and knowledge, but the more you apply yourself, the easier it will become. Remember, motion can be slight or broad, but all of the same rules apply. Onward!

HOW TO CREATE MOTION

SECTION 7:

Creating the appearance of motion requires a knowledge of how each separate body part operates in general, but there are ways to create motion with the entire body, and not just its parts. The center line of a figure is one of the adjustable components of a figure that can create the appearance of motion. A center line is simply a line that follows the center of the figure—generally drawn along the spine—and runs from head to toe. The angle that the center line takes can imply motion, and the greater the angle is from the vertical, the more motion it implies. A static, standing figure with a completely vertical center line, for instance, would have no apparent motion. At the opposite end of the spectrum, a sprinting individual could be leaning forward a great deal, and the angle of the center line would imply a great deal of motion. A twist in the center line creates a fluidity to the figure that also implies motion. Twisting certain body parts, like the head, arms, torso, etc., results in the appearance of motion.

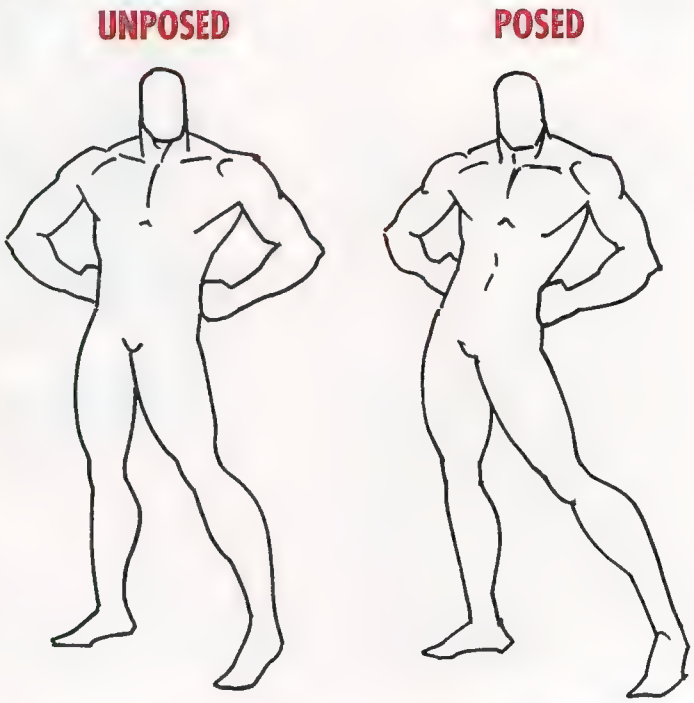
The last way to create motion is to oppose the hips and shoulders—in other words, twist them so they are in opposite positions. You should use this carefully in every drawing you do, but be subtle. If a figure is sitting in an airplane, it shouldn't be twisted too much, so that the figure looks like it just died in a plane crash. Instead, the twisting should be very subtle, but present enough so that the person appears to have life and isn't just another cardboard cutout, this time sitting in a plane seat. The drawings below demonstrate these three concepts, so check them out.



TO POSE OR NOT TO POSE

SECTION 8:

Some artists like to pose their figures, and some don't. Usually, poses are used for dramatic effect, and not for when a hero or villain is doing anything that requires flexibility or action. As a rule of thumb, poses stand out as poses, because the figure doesn't look as relaxed and natural as it usually does. In the case of posing, the figure will generally look fake, because real action makes more sense. In some cases, a storyline might call for a pose at a specific point. However, a drawback to this is that the more you use poses, the less significant each pose becomes. So save poses for when they are really needed. That way, the effect is very dramatic when it does appear. The two drawings on the right show the same figure in two different stances, one posed and the other unposed. Notice the way each one appears, and try to get a grasp of posed figures versus unposed figures.



PLOTS AND MORE PLOTS!

Sorry, writers, but all of your letters keep asking for more plots. So, I'm going to give you more plots, by gum!

This time, I'm giving you six pages of plot (and the cover) for a Brute & Babe story called "The Death of Pheros." Make sure to incorporate everything I've taught you about anatomy, including twists and motion. Good luck!

KEY TO TERMS

fg: foreground
ls: long shot
cu: close-up
mcu: medium close-up
anim-shot: animated shot

SECTION 1:

Brute and Babe
"The Death of Pheros"

Cover: Pheros, on his knees in fg, arms out, hands up, fingers curled into knots (so to speak), mouth open, screaming, as black energy swirls over him, eating away at him...Dramaurg stands behind him, smiling wickedly, triumphantly, hands grasping the sides of Pheros's head, energy pouring off of him into Pheros, head, of course, knocked out in black, gem on forehead glowing with life...Mael roaring, bound, straining against the organic-tech bonds that hold him, Auoro slumped, arms up, confined within some type of energy field...

MY VERSION OF THE COVER

SECTION 2:

[Note: * symbol denotes the end of a panel.]

Page 1: Ls of an isolated rock formation in the middle of an ocean, waves are crashing, the sky is beautiful and striking. * Pull in closer on rock formation; Pheros sits there, brooding. * Big, full, cool shot of Pheros sitting, distraught, tears streaming down his face. * [3 panels]

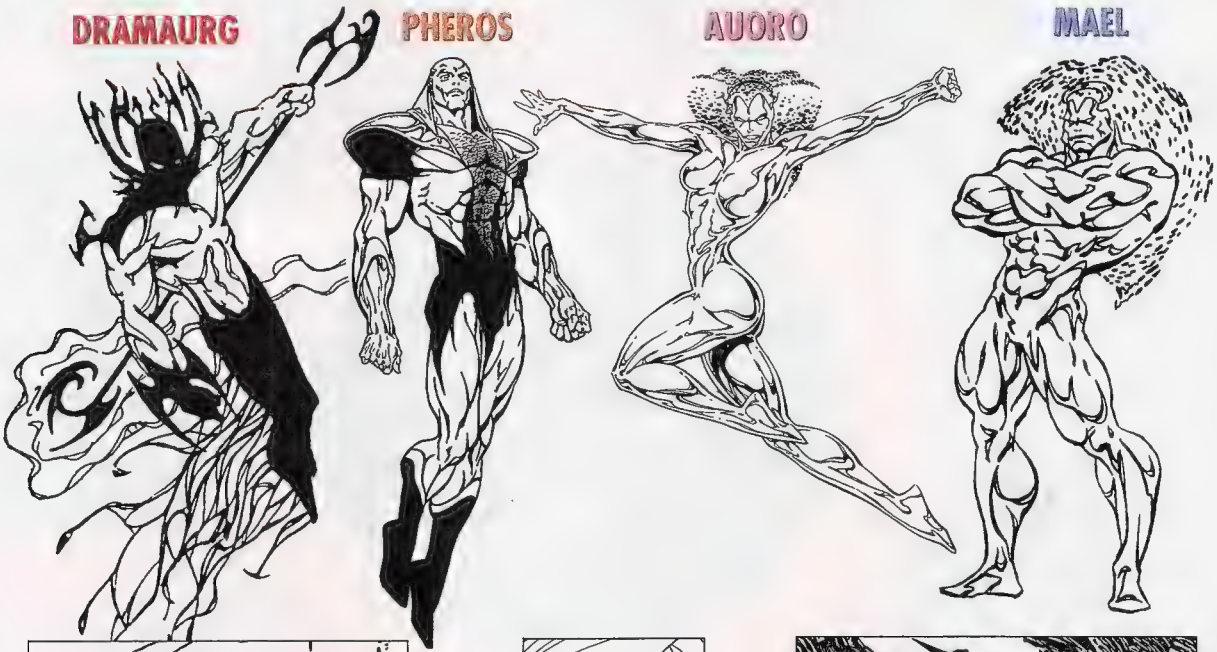
Page 2: Cu of Pheros's face, eyes haunted, expression haggard, tears streaming down face. * Big shot of Pheros, rising, crying out with despair. * Three-panel shot across bottom of page of Pheros rising up from the rock formation into the upper atmosphere, thinking about how he must cleanse this world. Rises up above rock and ocean (in these three panels, Pheros stays the same size, and in the same place within the panel, but the background changes. His pose will change only slightly). * Pheros rises up into clouds. * He rises up into atmosphere, the Earth's (?) horizon curving slightly below him. * [5 panels]

Page 3: (Three-panel pull-in on Pheros, focus on face) Pheros starting to get angry. * In closer, his rage building, his body starting to shimmer. * In tight, rage intensified, body shimmering with heat. * Big shot of Pheros, full figure, perspective, enraged, body glowing with power, a hair's breadth away from eradicating all life on the planet below. * Small panel, mcu Pheros's face, drained of emotion, blank, uttering one small word: "...No..." * [5 panels]

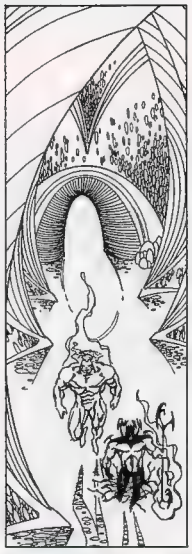
Page 4: Four-panel anim-shot of Pheros, turning to look up and back over his shoulder, mcu focus on Pheros's face, figure size will not change from panel to panel. First panel: Shot of Pheros, blank, granite face, body cooling, mumbling, "...Not again..." * Pheros slowly turning his head, starting to look back over his shoulder, body cooling more rapidly. * Looking farther back, body almost completely cool. * Fully looking over shoulder, body completely cool, one word escapes him: "Maelloryll..." * Three tall panels, first one small; they grow larger by the third, which is pretty big. First panel: Ls of Pheros, floating off into space. * In closer on Pheros, traveling deeper out of the atmosphere. * Cool shot of Pheros, disappearing into an omega-shaped burst of light. * [7 panels]

Page 5: Cut to five panels across the top of the page. Cu of Mael's face, grimacing in pain. * Hot shot of Auoro, kind of whimpering, afraid and worried for Mael. * Mcu of a "dog's" hand, holding a device. * Mcu Mael, twisting with pain, some sort of restraint/torture device on him. * Cu Auoro, crying. * Big bottom panel, shot past writhing, pain-wracked Mael, to his brother, the Dramaurg, who is lounging on a type of throne, in heavy shadows, sipping wine, surrounded by dogs and courtiers, smugly observing the proceedings. * [6 panels]

Page 6: Mcu on Dramaurg, in shadows, saying, "You tried to usurp my destiny..." * Three-shot pull-in on Mael's face. First: Mael confident and regal, even though he's in chains. * In closer. * In tight on Mael, who says, "It was never for you..." * Cu Dramaurg, still in shadows, looking thoughtful. * Mcu Dramaurg, reaching out, gently stroking Auoro's face, Auoro wincing away. * [6 panels]



THE PALACE



THRONE ROOM

VERE

CONCLUSION:

That's all! So check out the reference pictures above, and start banging away. Get to work, you slackers! And as always: best of luck, and keep drawing!

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CONTEST

Get Published!

In a nationwide talent search,

Wizard Press and

Malibu Comics are teaming up to make some comic fans' dreams come true, by having their work published in a comic book!

Grand Prize **(Three winners, one in each category)**

An eight-page assignment (as either a writer, penciler, or inker) to work side-by-side with an industry pro and be published in an upcoming issue of *Ultraverse Premiere*.

Second Prize **(Two winners in each category)**

Samples of your entries showcased in an Ultraverse editorial, a set of all Ultraverse books, up to and including the "Godwheel" event, and a full set of Ultraverse hologram editions, up to and including *UltraForce* #1.

Third Prize **(10 winners in each category)**

A set of five random Ultra-Limited editions.

So how do you break into the big leagues? Read on...

Malibu Logotype and all Characters Depicted ™ & © Malibu Comics Entertainment Inc.

"How do I become a comic book pro?"

The road to becoming big and famous is fairly simple. All you gotta do is marry Roseanne. No, no, just kidding. All you gotta do is follow the directions below for the category you wish to enter, or heck, go for the gusto and enter all three. Here's what you do:

Writer

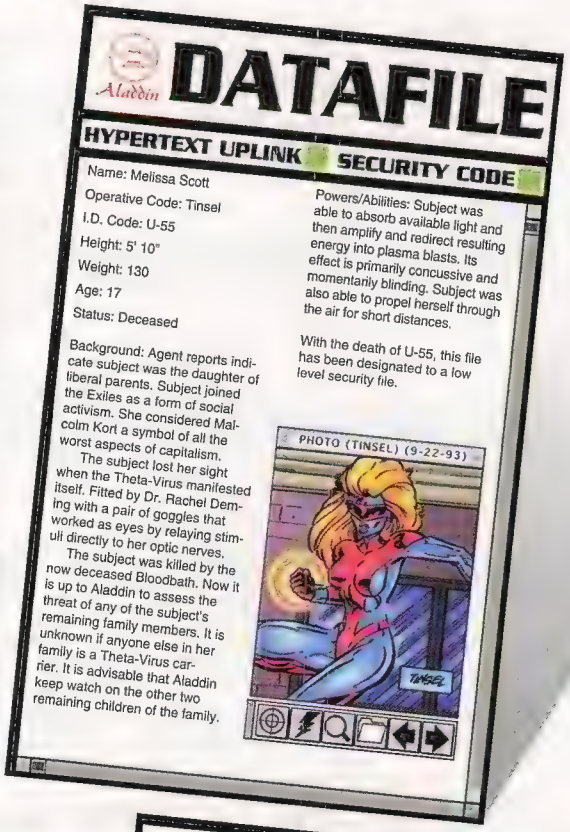
Submit a two-page, double-spaced story **synopsis** involving at least one of the following deceased Exiles characters: Catapult, Tinsel, or Trax (just look at these three Datafiles to get the skinny on them). Pretend they weren't killed, and write a sample story featuring at least one of them. You can include other pre-existing Ultraverse characters, but the Exiles character must be the main character in the story.

Penciler

Submit at least one completed page of pencils, featuring any pre-existing Ultraverse character. Don't do any of those sissy pin-ups, though. Go for multiple panels instead. Come on, you're trying to tell a story here! Submissions can be on any form of unlined paper or posterboard (8 1/2" X 11" minimum) and must be in black-and-white. Do not fold, bend, or roll artwork. Mail flat to avoid damage. All entries are nonreturnable and become property of Wizard Press.

Inker

Submit a complete page of inks, plus a photocopy of the pencils they're worked from. Submissions can be on any form of unlined paper or posterboard (8 1/2" X 11" minimum) and must be in black-and-white. Do not fold, bend, or roll artwork. Mail flat to avoid damage. All entries are nonreturnable and become property of Wizard Press.



MENTORS

So, if you're one of the lucky three to be chosen as a Grand Prize winner, you'll be assigned an Ultraverse story. To insure that your assignment will not only be a blast to work on, but a real learning experience to boot, you'll work side-by-side with some of the best names in the industry. Like who?

Due to professional responsibilities, the participating creators could change by the time the work on the eight-page *Ultraverse Premiere* story begins. Winners will be notified if such a change occurs.

Len Strazewski

Len Strazewski currently resides in Chicago, Ill. He received a Bachelors Degree in Journalism from Northwestern University, a master's in Creative Writing from the University of Illinois, and a master's in Industrial Relations from Loyal University. Some of Len's past works include *Justice Society of America*, *Starman*, *The Fly*, and *Street Fighter*. Currently, he co-writes *Prime* and *Prototype* for Malibu Comics's Ultraverse. Len is also one of the founding fathers of the Ultraverse.

Scott Kolins

Scott Kolins currently resides in San Leandro, Calif. The majority of his artistic talent was obtained through studying with artists Dennis Jensen, Mike Chen, Kim DeMulder, Bart Sears, Steve Geiger, and Bob Layton, and writer/editor Jim Shooter. Some of his past works include *Green Lantern*, the 1994 *Hawkeye* mini-series, and *Spider-Man: The Mutant Agenda*. Presently, Scott pencils *Freex* for Malibu Comics's Ultraverse.

Jeff Whiting

Jeff Whiting currently resides in sunny Central Florida. He began working in comics back in 1990, doing backgrounds for inker John Beatty. Other than a commercial art course at a local community college, his only formal art training is working with Beatty. Jeff worked on New England Comics's *The Tick* before moving over to Malibu to work on *Street Fighter* and *The Ferret*, and eventually going over to the Ultraverse line. He has done work on *Mantra*, *Sludge*, and *Prime*, and will soon be the regular inker on *The Solution*.

IN ALL THREE CATEGORIES, ABSOLUTELY NO NEW SUPERHERO OR SUPERVILLAIN CHARACTERS CAN BE INTRODUCED. IF YOU DO INTRODUCE A NEW HERO OR VILLAIN, YOU'LL BE IMMEDIATELY DISQUALIFIED. YOU MUST ALSO SIGN THE MALIBU ACCEPTANCE AGREEMENT (OR A PHOTOCOPY OF IT) ON PAGE 114 AND ATTACH IT TO YOUR SUBMISSION.

FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS FOR THE APPROPRIATE CATEGORY YOU WISH TO ENTER, AND ATTACH YOUR NAME, FULL ADDRESS (INCLUDING ZIP CODE), DATE OF BIRTH, AND PHONE NUMBER WITH AREA CODE, TO YOUR ACTUAL SUBMISSION. THEN SIGN THE ACCEPTANCE AGREEMENT ON PAGE 114, AND MAIL IT, ALONG WITH YOUR ORIGINAL SUBMISSION, TO:

Malibu Talent Search Contest
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920-2064

YER DEADLINE'S FEBRUARY 24, 1995, SO GET MOVING!

Miss the deadline and you're self-publishing, buddy.

ACCEPTANCE AGREEMENT

If you wanna win, you MUST (emphasis on the MUST) fill out and sign this agreement, including it with your submission. Oh, yeah, please read it first! If you forget to include the agreement (or forget to sign it!), you will be disqualified. Don't say we didn't warn ya!

TO CONTEST ENTRANTS:

Thank you for agreeing to enter The Wizard Talent Search Contest.

1. As part of this contest, you will send in your submission (the "Submission"), which shall be your interpretation of at least one (1) of Malibu's characters from its EXILES® comic book series. You may also use other Malibu characters from the ULTRAVERSE ® as supporting cast. In the penciling category, at least one completed page (8 1/2" X 11" minimum) must be submitted. Inkers will submit a complete page of inks (8 1/2" X 11" minimum), plus a photocopy of the pencils off which they worked. Writers will submit a two-page, double-spaced story synopsis involving one of the EXILES® characters. No original character(s) by you will be accepted.
2. Your Submission shall be provided to Wizard Press on or prior to the close of business on February 24, 1995, and all persons who do not submit their Submission by that time shall not be included as entrants in the contest.
3. You agree that the Submission, including but not limited to, any drawings, story outlines, paintings, or other creative materials (collectively, the "Materials"), shall be a "work made for hire" as defined by the U.S. Copyright Act (17 USCA 101) for Malibu, and such results and proceeds are the exclusive property of Malibu. In the alternative, you hereby agree to irrevocably assign, in perpetuity and throughout the universe, to Malibu all of your rights, title and interest, including all copyright rights, in and to such Materials.
4. There will be three (3) winners (a writer, a penciler, and an inker) (collectively, the "Winners") selected by Malibu Comics ("Malibu"), a division of Malibu Comics Entertainment, Inc., who shall be chosen from a total of thirteen (13) finalists in each category. These finalists will be chosen by Wizard Press from all the contest entrants on or prior to March 10, 1995.
5. The winners will be assigned by Malibu a "work made for hire" 8-page story that will involve pre-existing ULTRAVERSE ® characters.
6. Upon such selection, the winners shall be contacted by Malibu as to the specifics for the "work made for hire" 8-page story.
7. If you are a winner, then prior to commencement of your contribution to the 8-page story, you shall execute Malibu's standard "Character Interest Agreement," which describes the amount of proceeds which may be paid to you with respect to any exploitation of your contribution to the 8-page story by Malibu.
8. You acknowledge and agree that Malibu has no obligation to develop or publish any comic book based upon the Materials, or to otherwise distribute or exploit the materials, provided that, in the event Malibu does exploit the Materials, you shall be paid your share of any receipts with respect to the 8-page story pursuant to the Character Interest Agreement; provided further that, in the event the 8-page story is exploited based upon revisions thereto contributed by persons other than the three winners, the participation to which you would otherwise be entitled pursuant to the Character Interest Agreement will be reduced by 50%.
9. This Agreement shall inure to the benefit of and be binding upon the parties hereto, their successors and assigns and all others acting by, through or in privity therewith.
10. This Agreement covers the entire understanding between the parties and shall be interpreted and construed under the laws of the State of California; and the parties intend to be bound hereby.
11. You shall execute and deliver to Malibu, without further consideration, such further documents from time to time as Malibu may request for the purpose of confirming Malibu's rights in and to the results and proceeds of your contribution to the materials submitted. Malibu, as attorney in fact for you, may sign these documents in your name and make appropriate dispositions of same.
12. In the event of any suit or legal action between the parties hereto with respect to the terms of this Agreement, the prevailing party in such suit or legal action shall be indemnified by the other party for its reasonable counsel fees, expenses and court costs.
13. You hereby agree to waive any and/or all rights to injunctive relief with respect to this Contest.
14. This Agreement sets forth the entire agreement between the parties with respect to the subject matter hereof and supersedes all prior and contemporaneous agreements and understanding of the parties except as may be expressly provided herein.

Please signify your acceptance of the above by signing the space indicated below.

Sincerely,

MALIBU COMICS, a division of
MALIBU COMICS ENTERTAINMENT, INC.

Accepted and agreed to:

Contest Entrant's Signature Dated

Contestant Name (print) Date of Birth (print)

Full Address (print)

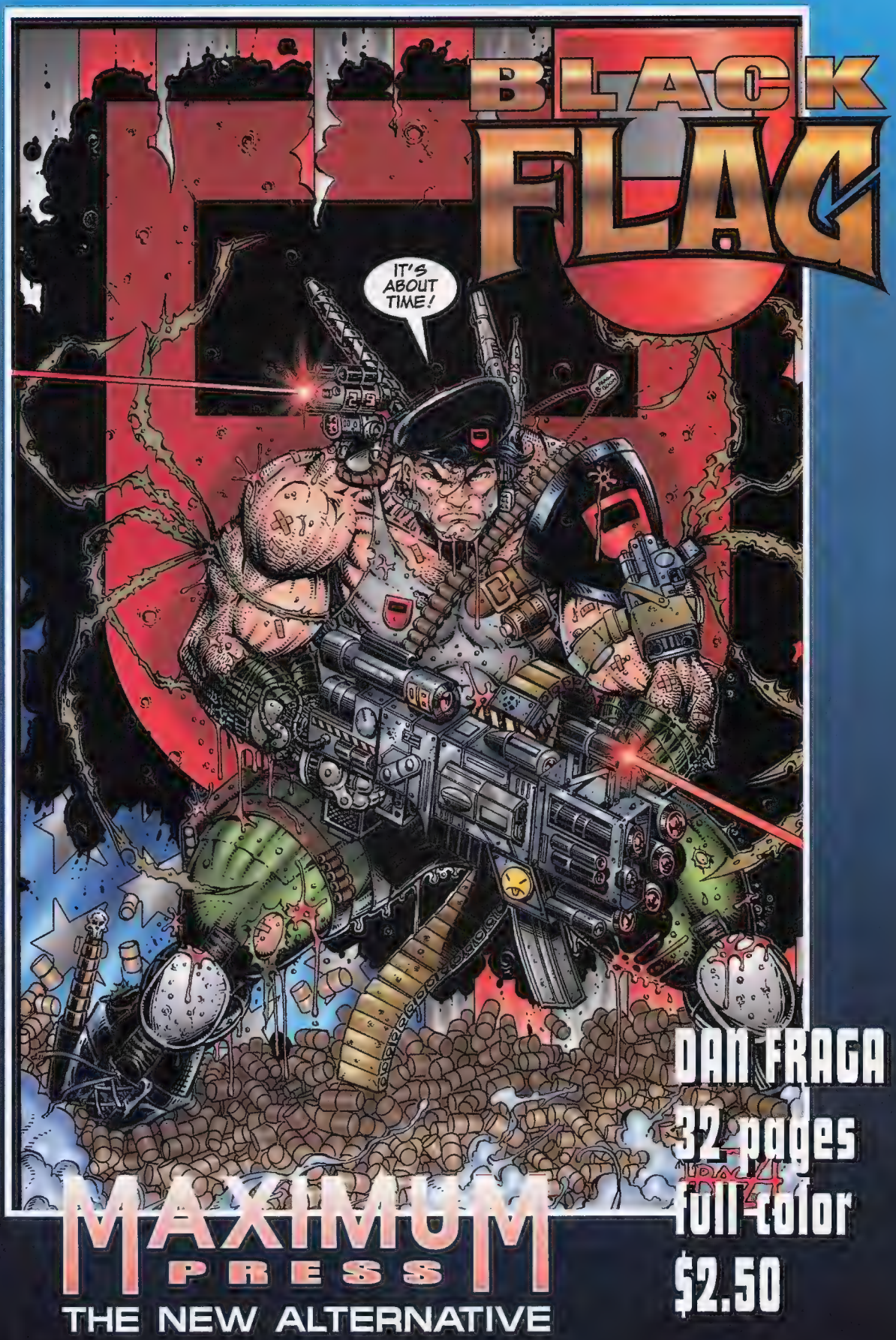
If Contest Entrant is under 18 years of age, then Parent or Legal Guardian's Signature is required here. Dated

Parent/Legal Guardian Name (print)

That legal jive.

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press and Malibu Comics, their immediate families, and any of them Bravura fellas. Geez, you guys can do it all anyway. If you want something to do, go help Art Adams get *Monkeyman and O'Brien* out. Print your name, address, city, state, zip code, telephone number with area code, and date of birth on your original submission, or on a three-by-five-inch index card, which you should attach to your submission. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry along with the signed acceptance agreement to Malibu Talent Search Contest, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064. No mechanical reproductions will be accepted. All entries become the property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state, and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes are offered. The prizes will be awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated, or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purpose and rules hereof. Wouldn't it be funny if, like, Rob Liefeld entered this contest under a fake name and lost big time? Hah, that'd be a hoot! **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by February 24, 1995.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Wizard Press will judge all contestants, narrowing the field to 13 in each category. Malibu will judge only those final 13 in each category, and select the winners. Any entries sent directly to Malibu Comics will be destroyed. Didja catch that last part? **All entries sent directly to Malibu Comics will be destroyed!** Tom Mason will personally take a huge freakin' Garden Weasel and ground your entries to mulch, and then take a whiz on 'em.

For the names of the winners, available after March 15th, 1995, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Malibu Talent Search Winners, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064, or just keep watching *Wizard*!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The *X-Men* cartoon experienced a slump in the ratings. Will this be its last season?

The comic insider's guide to Hollywood.

BY DAVE GALVAN

a STORMY YEAR IN HOLLYWOOD

From *Lois and Clark* to the Spider-Man film from Carolco, here's what happened in the busy entertainment world this past year.

JANUARY

The year of 1994 started out with a bang for comic-related material in Hollywood. The ratings for *Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman* grew steadily stronger, despite vocal criticism from comic book fans over the lack of much action. Meanwhile, on January 24, Fox unveiled a new breed of superhero with *M.A.N.T.I.S.* The two-hour pilot, created by Sam Hamm and Sam Raimi, garnered the highest ratings at that time, and the show was picked up for the fall schedule.

FEBRUARY

Robin Williams had been rumored to play the Riddler in the third Batman feature. Williams was interested, but eventually said no, due to objections with the script; he felt the part was too small and shallow, and wanted the Riddler to be as big a villain as Tommy Lee Jones's Two-Face. Within a few weeks of losing Williams, the company signed Jim Carrey to play the enigmatic villain. At this point, Michael Keaton was still in renegotiations to return as Batman, and was expected to do so.

Image co-founder Rob Liefeld announced that he'd pulled out of negotiations with CBS to develop Youngblood as a cartoon. Citing creative differences, Liefeld decided he didn't want to compromise any of his characters for the network's sake.

MARCH

Jim Lee's *WildC.A.T.s* animated series got picked up by CBS for its Saturday morning lineup. The show was originally scheduled to go head-to-head with Fox's *X-Men*, but Fox blinked first, and at the last minute placed *The Adventures of Batman and Robin* in the competing time slot.

The road to television for Image titles has not been an easy one so far. Originally, CBS optioned four cartoons based upon Image comics: *Youngblood*, *WildC.A.T.s*, *Savage Dragon*, and *Freak Force*. Eventually passing on *Freak Force*, CBS was considering the final three as a possible 90-minute block.

After Liefeld's exit from CBS, the network's children's programmer, Judy Price, then went to Jim Lee to develop *WildC.A.T.s*. *Savage Dragon* was also reportedly given a green light, but was put on the back shelf because of an already full lineup on CBS.

APRIL

Investors pulled out of *Crusade*, the latest proposed Arnold Schwarzenegger flick set in medieval times, which put movie studio Carolco in a bind. After losing several million dollars already invested in this film, Carolco now seems to want to let Arnold sell the film to whomever offers enough cash.

MAY

Extreme filed suit against the *Youngblood* animators, Roustabout Productions, alleging

X-MEN AND X-MEN LOGOTYPE ™ & © MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

that Extreme owned all the cels and master tapes from all the footage of the cartoon produced by Roustabout. The matter would eventually be settled in October.

The Crow, based on James O'Barr's morbid comic book tale, opened nationwide on May 13, breaking records at the box office for a Miramax film. Brandon Lee's final performance was emotional and somber.

JuNe

On June 15, the Los Angeles Superior Court denied an attempt by Extreme Studios to take possession of over 2,000 animation cels and master tapes from the *Youngblood* footage that had been made thus far by Roustabout.

Meanwhile, for some odd reason, the third Batman feature was given the name of *Batman Forever*.

JuLy

After months of negotiations, Michael Keaton officially dropped out of the role of Batman in *Batman Forever*. In a move which surprised fans, Val Kilmer was picked by director Joel Schumacher to fill the cape and cowl. Although creative differences were cited, the real reason Keaton did not want to return was lack of screen time—something which he reportedly resented in *Batman Returns*. Keaton realized that producers were viewing him as a rich man's Adam West. So, when Keaton went to Warner Bros., he purposefully asked for $15 million, just so he could be released from his obligations in the contract. Kilmer signed a three-picture deal with Warner Bros. to play Batman in at least two more movies, if *Batman Forever* does well enough to warrant further sequels.

"No, I don't believe you! Who in his right mind would cancel our show?!?"

That same month, New Line Cinema announced that it will be producing a fourth *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* film. In the deal inked out with Surge Licensing, the Turtles' licensing agent (who also represents Entity Comics's *Zen: Intergalactic Ninja*), New Line will produce the film with its in-house production unit and, for the first time, will receive a share of the merchandising. The deal also gives New Line the rights to produce further sequels if the company decides to do more.

The Shadow opened on July 1 with mixed results from critics, and even worse results at the box office. Younger moviegoers, unfamiliar with the characters, stayed away from the theaters in droves, despite a well-written story and a great cast, including Alec Baldwin as The Shadow, and Penelope Ann Miller as Margo Lane.

Later that month, on July 29, *The Mask* successfully opened, making Jim Carrey a major box office draw. The Dark Horse comic gave New Line Cinema its biggest hit to date, showcasing incredible effects by Industrial Light and Magic. The film was such a success, that Jim Carrey was signed to do a sequel before the film was even through with post-production.

aUGuST

In mid-August, Chris Columbus (*Home Alone*) announced that he will most definitely be directing a major *Fantastic Four* movie for Neue Constantine. So why was the Roger Corman *Fantastic Four* made, yet never released? Well, now that Columbus will be directing a big-budget *FF* movie, Neue Constantine head Bernd Eichinger has publicly stated that the only reason the Corman film was even made, was that the rights to the film were about to expire, so the film *had* to be made.

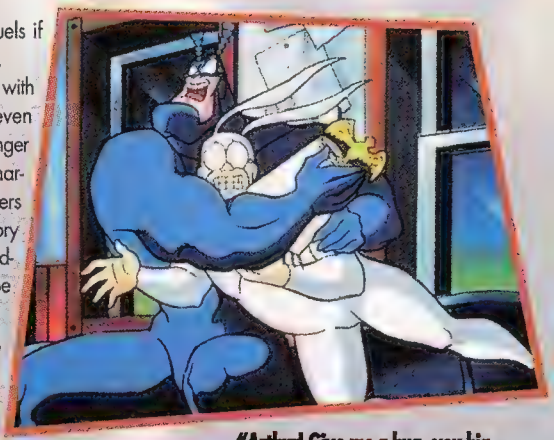
Vootie! Nexus fans, rejoice. It was announced at the recent San Diego Comic Con that Hanna-Barbera will be producing *Nexus: The Movie*. This animated feature, still in the development stage, is projected to begin production next year. According to creator Mike Baron, "the people at Hanna-Barbera are all comics fans and readers of *Nexus*. They want to make this film 'anti-Disney.' Everyone tries to copy Disney and make family films." The fact that Nexus himself is an assassin should lead to a dark and serious animated film, resulting in a possible PG-13 rating.

Damon Wayans's comedy *Blankman*, released on August 19, just couldn't stand up to the mighty *Forrest Gump*.

M.A.N.T.I.S., the series, officially debuted to mixed results on Fox. While the series captured good demographics with males 18 to 41 years of age, anyone will tell you that the key demographic is females 18 to 41 years of age. The series was revamped for a different audience, and lacked the pilot's social bite. Found constantly in the bottom five of the Nielsen ratings, *M.A.N.T.I.S.* will probably not be returning next fall.

SePTEmbER

Batman Forever started filming in New York at the end of September. The New York shoot finished up in October and then moved on to Los Angeles. Rumors of Jim Carrey and Val Kilmer not getting along have been circulating. Reportedly, Carrey had been goofing off on the set a little too much for the Shakespearean Kilmer. Warner Bros. is denying it all, according to spokesperson Jeff Walker, who says that both Kilmer and Carrey have gotten "...along wonderfully [since] the first day they met."



"Arthur! Give me a hug, you big mothball." FOX-TV launched *The Tick* series in its fall lineup.

Actress Genevieve Bujold dropped out as Captain Kathryn Janeway in the upcoming *Star Trek: Voyager* TV series, set to debut in January. The role went to Kate Mulgrew, best known for her role as the wife of TV detective Columbo in the short-lived *Mrs. Columbo* TV series.

The fall TV lineup also started in September, flooding the airwaves with comic book characters galore. Every network on TV ran a comic book-related or science fiction/fantasy series. On ABC, *Tales from the Cryptkeeper* started its second season, introducing the Old Witch along with the Vault Keeper. In primetime, *Lois and Clark* returned in its old time slot, and came in third in its season premiere, being wedged out by CBS's *Murder, She Wrote* and NBC's *seaQuest DSV*. *Lois and Clark*'s premiere surprised many entertainment industry insiders, by beating out a new episode of *The Simpsons*.

Fox had most of the superhero-toons with *The Adventures of Batman and Robin*, *X-Men*, and *The Tick*. *Batman and Robin* is still a ratings grabber, depressing fans with the fact that there will be no more new episodes after the initial 85. *X-Men*, which started its new season in August, had a slump in the ratings, adding to the rumor that this might be the show's last season.

On the syndication front, *The Marvel Action Hour* debuted with an embarrassing showing, with subpar animation, and celebrity voices that have no place in the show. The series, which is not popular with fans, will hopefully go the way of disco.

On a cheerier front, *Phantom 2040* debuted with intelligent stories and likable characters. Placing the ghost who walks in a futuristic set-

Batman, Robin, and Harley Quinn ™ & © DC Comics. *The Tick* ™ & © Ben Edlund.

ting seems a little out of place for the jungle-originated Phantom. However, the series proves that if you have creators who care about the product, the show will turn out well.

OctOberR

The Spider-Man movie is stuck in a web of lawsuits. It all started in 1989 when Marvel made a deal with 21st Century (which produced *Captain America*—you know, the one from 1990 with the idiotic Italian Red Skull) for the rights to Spidey. During hard financial times, 21st Century struck a deal with Viacom for the TV broadcast rights. The company also signed feature rights to Carolco, with Columbia/TriStar getting the home video rights.

Now, 21st Century, which sees a large bucket of cash for itself, is battling over the validity of that agreement. Also, former 21st Century head Menachem Golan (who produced *Superman IV*, *Masters of the Universe*, and *Captain America*) is now fighting to get a producer credit for the film when it gets made. Carolco has also filed suit against Viacom and Columbia/TriStar to obtain the video and television rights. Viacom has filed suit against Carolco and 21st Century, claiming that an earlier agreement with 21st Century not only gave the company the rights for television, but also the right of first refusal on a feature film. Add to this MGM, who is also threatening a lawsuit, claiming that it had a previous agreement with Marvel Entertainment to produce the Spider-Man movie. The film will not be released in 1995 like everyone at Marvel had hoped, and the best the film can do now is be released in early '96. Unless Carolco wins this battle, the company's money problems will have reached epic proportions (see April section).

Carolco sees the Spider-Man movie as a way to keep the ship from sinking. If it can reproduce the success Warner Bros. had with *Batman* in 1989, that would give the studio enough revenue to keep it afloat. Unfortunately for Carolco, investors are running left and right, and the company's stock has dropped significantly within the last few months.

Speaking of lawsuits, it seems that the whole Extreme/Roustabout fiasco has finally come to its conclusion. In a press release, both parties stated that they have settled the lawsuit and that all previous statements are retracted. No specific terms or agreements that were reached, however, were revealed.

CBS started airing *WildC.A.T.s*, produced by the Canadian animation company Nelvana, in October. Although the show was strongly hyped, the overall product disappointed most fans of the Image comic book with undetailed animation and juvenile stories. The premiere episode came in second in its time slot, second to *The Adventures of Batman and Robin*.

NoVEmbeR

Star Trek: Generations was released despite delays in shooting. The movie tested early to an audience of Trekkies who were all very disappointed with the film. The audiences reportedly wanted more of a "buddy" feel between Captains Kirk and Picard. Paramount denies that the audience disliked it, even though the company recalled stars Patrick Stewart, William Shatner, and Malcolm McDowell to reshoot the climactic battle scene at the end of the movie.

One episode of the *Spider-Man* cartoon aired this month, with the series airing in its regular time slot beginning in February of '95.

DeCEmbeR

Zen: Intergalactic Ninja: The Movie is scheduled to start filming in December with a late '95 release. This live-action motion picture will be produced by Sceneries Entertainment, best known for its artsy-style films from Europe. The film will shoot in and around Death Valley, Calif. and will be rated PG-13. The picture is aimed at a family audience and will be heavy on action. Zen's origin will be in the film, and a brand-new villain will be introduced. Philippe Diaz (*The Royal Way*) will produce the film along with Mark Freedman as executive producer. Director Brian Yunza (*Return of the Living Dead III*, *Bride of Re-animator*, and original creator of *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*) will direct the feature and join Chris Solimine to write it. Name actors are being considered, with a famous voice filling in the part of Zen. A new toy line will be introduced to coincide with the movie, and these will be based on the movie itself.

Action star Jean-Claude Van Damme stars in the action-packed film *Street Fighter*. Produced by Ed Pressman (*The Crow*) and written and directed by Steven de Souza (*The Flintstones*, *Die Hard I* and *II*), the film is rated PG-13—Van Damme's first film that's not rated R. In the film, Van Damme plays Colonel William Guile, who must lead a group of street fighters through the jungle (that's right, *street* fighters through the *jungle*) to save 70 United Nations and relief workers from the sadistic M. Bison. The late Raul Julia (*The Addams Family*) is Bison, Ming-Na Wen (*The Joy Luck Club*) is Chung-Li Zang, Wes Studi (*The Last of the Mohicans*) plays Viktor Sagat, Damian Chapa (*Under Siege*) is Ken Masters, and singer/actress Kylie Minogue plays Cammy. ☆

Dave Galvan is a Portland, Ore.-based freelance writer who specializes in the entertainment industry.

The late Raul Julia plays M. Bison in *Street Fighter*, the movie based on the popular video game.

PHOTO COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL CITY STUDIOS INC.

Mega-Merger Good for Comics Fans

The recently announced teaming of filmmaker Steven Spielberg, record company exec David Geffen, and former Disney president of production Jeffrey Katzenberg in a mega-studio project, is already sending shockwaves through the entertainment industry. And, according to *Hollywood Reporter* reporter Leslie Siegel, the hype is certainly justified.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime situation, because of the nature of the people involved," says Siegel in critiquing the mega-merger. "These are the three most powerful people in the industry. They can make things happen real quick."

The new team, whose energies will focus on television, movies, and music, also has the advantage of being financially beholding to no one.

"There won't be so many restraints," continues Siegel. "With a lot of studios there is a lot of red tape. But this is a situation where it's their personal money involved. So once a project is greenlighted, it won't sit in development hell or be shelved. It will be made."

Of particular interest to *Wizard* readers is the potential for a heavyweight fantasy push. "What this means to the comic book-fantasy audience, is that you're going to see some real beautiful animation coming out of this union. This will definitely blow the doors open for animation and films, with more feeling to them."

Siegel says that ultimately the collective temperament of Spielberg, Geffen, and Katzenberg will carry the creative day.

"Their temperaments are very much alike. They're open to new things and to new blood. Doors will definitely be blown open."

—Marc Shapiro

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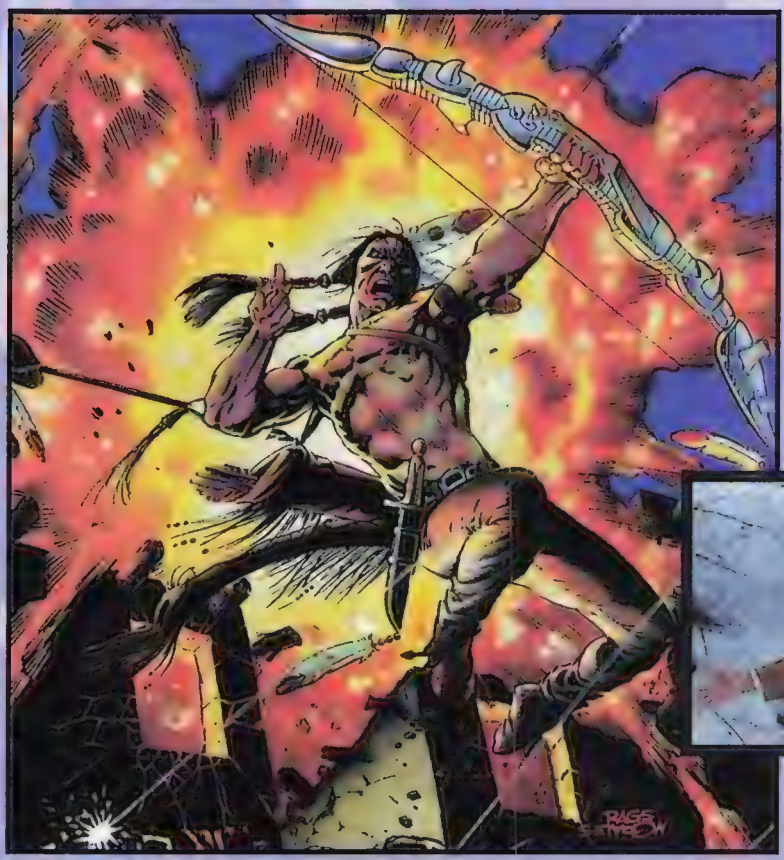
Eight to the FoRe

Wizard takes a look at eight of the comic book industry's most underrated artistic talents: Rags Morales, Mike Parobeck, Darryl Banks, Mike Wieringo, Travis Charest, J. Scott Campbell, Doug Mahnke, and Aaron Lopresti.

by Marc Shapiro

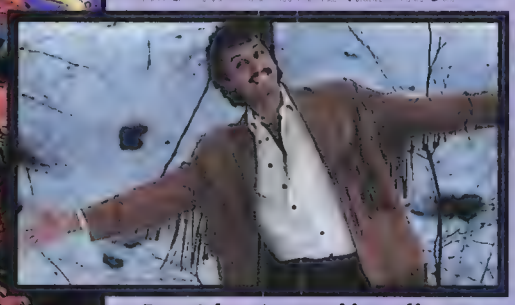


Turok ™ & © Western Publishing, Geomancer ™ & © Voyager Communications

Rags Morales

Comic book speculators, beware! Ralph "Rags" Morales is here to tell you that you're missing the boat in a major way.

"When I was a kid, I didn't give a [hoot] about keeping a comic book nice," chortles Morales, an illustrator who is presently the toast of the town as the penciler behind Valiant's *Geomancer*. Morales constantly read and made use of a classic Batman comic where the Caped Crusader encountered a werewolf. "I traced over it; panels were pasted on my walls. I really tore into it. I don't have that book anymore, and I don't want it. The memories are more important to me than anything I can stick inside a plastic bag."



Rags (above) struts his stuff on two of Valiant's tough guys, Turok (left) and Geomancer (next page, at top).

Morales was born in Manhattan, but moved to New Jersey at age five. "Because the [Manhattan] neighborhood wasn't ready for my ethnicity," describes Morales, who says he's an American of Puerto Rican descent, found it difficult to make friends, and so took refuge in comic books. In that Batman/werewolf book—art courtesy of Neal Adams—Morales found perfection.

"It was the style of illustration I really appreciated," he says. "This was realistic. This was impressive to me."

Largely self-taught—with a couple of years in the Joe Kubert School of Graphic Art for good measure—Morales sheepishly explains that he came to comics "the hard way."

"I was working as a silk-screen artist, but had to quit when my boss got caught up in a copyright-infringement case. So I quit. Then my roommate skipped and left me with a big lease on an apartment. I ended up at Christmas with a job at a submarine sandwich shop. It was a real bleak Christmas around my house."

Undaunted, Morales and his portfolio hit the bricks. His first strike was a three-page story on a *Captain Action* revival for Main Publishing in the '80s. DC was the next player to take an interest in Rags's lines and hired him to do a *Forgotten Realms* series for the company's TSR game-division imprint. Being big on financial security, Morales snapped up a year's contract to do the book. He jumped over to *Black Condor* for 10 issues, and then to DC/Archie Comics's Impact Comics imprint to draw four issues worth of *The Crusaders*. But what he considers to be his "big break" came when Valiant came calling with what turned out to be a lengthy run at the helm of *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*.

"It was tough at first," recalls Morales of his *Turok* turn. "I was following Bart [Sears, the title's former artist] on the book, and people were a bit skeptical of my taking over. But after the first couple of issues, people started coming back and giving me a chance."

The Morales odyssey continued with a single shot at *Shadowman* with issue #25, a brief return to *Turok*, and finally his current ride on the pages of *Geomancer*. "I've been in the business about five years now, and I've had four #1 [issues]. I kind of look at that as a big deal."

While Morales believes that *Turok* has been his finest hour, his older work has a special place in his heart. "Quite frankly, I think the *Forgotten Realms* stuff I did was quite charming. There was something quite friendly about that stuff, and I think revisiting that would be fun."

The future for Rags is full of creative riches: a trip that will most likely include a return engagement to *Turok* and further exploration of a style that Morales says is finally his own. "I've always been big on illustrators who were big on detail. I think that's definitely where I'm going."

But as to his being acknowledged as something special in the comic book universe? It's a mystery to him.

"I don't draw broads in thongs with big guns," he chuckles. "Why would anybody be interested in me?"

Mike Parobeck

People take one look at Mike Parobeck's work, rave about it, and do things like hire him. Parobeck takes one look at his work, and it makes him want to pray to the porcelain god.

"Every time I look at my work, something inside of me flinches and I think, 'God! That's awful!' I just can't stand my stuff. I just can't imagine that people are buying it."

People are indeed buying it. Witness his second year at the helm of *Batman Adventures* and the continued praise heaped upon him at conventions for the departed and highly missed 10-issue *Justice Society of America* series that was canceled in 1993. "My style is not something I can put my finger on. My approach to art and drawing comics is a mystery to me."

The mystery for Parobeck began in Lancaster, Ohio, where he drew regularly, but "was not even close to being serious about doing comic books," he recalls. His skills initially took him to the Central Academy of Commercial Art in Cincinnati. "But I really hated

Parobeck's "animated" Dark Knight, about to get it from Two-face.

Batman, Flash, Green Lantern, Justice Society of America and all related characters ™ & © DC Comics

Mike Parobeck (left) and friends: The Bat-villains (far left) and the J.S.A. (lower left).

advertising and loved reading comics," particularly those courtesy of masters Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, and *X-Men* comics. Parobeck eventually got to know DC editor Brian Augustyn; encouraged, he responded by bombarding the editor with "Xerox copies of drawings." Augustyn eventually rang up Parobeck and said, "Here. Do a story."

The illustrator's first effort was "a few pages" on a Dr. Light story in DC's *Secret Origins* #37, which led to a full run on DC's 16-issue *El Diablo* series with writer Gerard Jones, then Impact Comics's *The Fly*, DC's *Justice Society*, and finally *Batman Adventures*, where Parobeck enjoys current success.

"It's an easy comic book to work on; there's a lot of fun involved. Kelley [Puckett, the writer] does a great job with the stories; he makes them interesting and exciting, just like the cartoon. But I've gotta say that Rick Burchett [the inker] is the artist on this book—the stuff that I pencil, he makes it just come alive. He's one hell of an inker—probably the best inker that I've ever worked with," Parobeck claims, adding that no other inker could do *Batman Adventures* nearly as well.

The artist notes that his favorite issue was the Robin story in issue #14. "I really like the Robin character," he says. "He's my favorite character to draw. I'd actually like to put him more into the book, just like the cartoon series is doing. I think it's important to put Batman and Robin together, to [display] the light side of Robin with the dark side of Batman—it helps the book."

If Parobeck, who now lives in Chicago, Ill., had his way, there would be more of a certain type of character in the series. "I'd like to do more of the monster type of villains; I'm a big fan of drawing monsters. I like Man-Bat, Clayface, and a couple of others; 'big story'-wise, they're good for comics."

Using the same style as *Batman Adventures*, Parobeck's pencils can also be seen in the *Superman & Batman Magazine* for Welsh Publishing, which is geared towards a younger audience. He says that he has no other specific future plans.

When asked about his hopes regarding the book's readership, Parobeck replies, "I'd like to see a lot [of] younger kids get into the book; [it can be used as] a reading tool. Comics are very important for kids, because they're something that they can understand and enjoy. If we reach these young kids, we can teach them to read a little easier."

Parobeck cites his *Justice Society* work as the jewel in his crown to date, but reverts back to self-deprecating when referring to his skills. "I think it's ironic that somebody who is so self-critical of his own work seems to be finding so many takers. I can't believe that I'm even involved in this [business]. It's amazing to me that anybody likes the way I draw. Thankfully, somebody does."

Darryl Banks

When not putting pencil to paper, comic book illustrator Darryl Banks teaches two college courses—one in illustration and one in comic book design—at his alma mater, the

Darryl (inset at right) helped breathe life into the new G.I. (right)...

Columbus College of Art and Design in Ohio. The man who is putting a new face on *Green Lantern* has even developed a comic book penciling course for the school. The students' response, according to Banks, is enthusiastic.

"They not only feel that I'm giving them positive information on how to get into the industry, but that it is coming from somebody in the industry right now, rather than somebody who is recalling things from a past time. I'm not recalling what I know [now]."

What Banks knows is *Green Lantern*, a gig that he considers both his dream project and his best work. "It's a big deal to me because *Green Lantern* has been around a long time, and not only have I been involved in creating a new Green Lantern, but also in creating a new Hal Jordan and even getting to rename him [Parallax]. *Green Lantern* is something I always wanted to do. I was never really satisfied with the application of the ring. I remember saying, 'If I had the Green Lantern ring, I would do this and this...' Now I'm getting the chance."

Banks pointed his pencil in the direction of a comic book career shortly after graduation from college—with expected results. "I had about eight zillion rejections," chuckles Banks. "I was sending samples to the DCs and the Marvels of the world and going to all the comic book shows and showing my stuff. But I just wasn't ready. In my mind, I thought I was good, but looking back, my stuff was pretty bad.

"I was your basic Marvel Zombie and wasn't into the independents, but my friends insisted that I give them a try, and I started sending my stuff to some of the smaller companies. At that point, I had a lot of near misses. Even when somebody would like my stuff, the company would go under."

But with so many samples floating around the comic book industry, it comes as no surprise that Innovation came across Banks's work, which in the interim had improved, and offered him his first jobs: a two-part *Cyberpunk* story, followed by a run of *Justice Machine*. Millennium Publications came calling and Banks came aboard, doing three of the four-issue *The Wild, Wild West* miniseries, a four-part *Doc Savage* miniseries, and some more *Justice Machine*, which, jokes Banks, "followed me over to Millennium." Banks then jumped to DC and *Legion of Super-Heroes*, before taking up the cause of *Green Lantern*.

It is an easygoing Banks who acknowledges that he is quite satisfied with his current *Green Lantern* assignment. "It doesn't get much better than this right now, as far as I'm concerned. I'm working with some good people, and I'm getting to do some real good work. Sure, I'm open to other things, and I'll be up for whatever comes my way in the future. But until that happens, I'd say *Green Lantern* is a pretty good place to be."

Banks realizes that a long-term tenure on *Green Lantern* will do wonders for his stock in the industry and may give him a sense of comic book immortality.

"I'd like to think that doing [the new] *Green Lantern* would insure me a place in comic book history," reflects Banks. "I hope it happens. It would be nice."

...and took your breath away as Hal fell from grace.

'Ringo's Flash, bustin' loose.

Mike Wieringo

The diploma was hardly cold in Mike Wieringo's hand when reality jumped up and smacked him right in the puss. "I had just spent four years majoring in fashion illustration [at Virginia Commonwealth University]. But by the time I graduated, I discovered that the fashion part of the industry was dying out. I didn't really have the fortitude for commercial illustration. So it was either get into comic books or nothing.

"I started buying comics because my dad was into them," Wieringo says. He began drawing his own comics for fun at age 11. Since then, he has turned to drawing them for a living and has become one of the guiding pencils in both the DC and Marvel Universes.

"I just try to keep things fun," says Wieringo of his drawing philosophy. "I like to do fun comics. It doesn't have to be realistic to be believable. In fact, I sometimes think that funny [material] might actually add something to certain books."

Wieringo already had an inkling that putting pencil to panel might be in his future while still in college. He says he then "started going to comic book shows, showing [his] work, and getting critiques." Following graduation and the decision to pursue comics full-time, Wieringo "took the summer off and started working on some samples."

The illustrator took his portfolio to the 1992 San Diego Comic Con, where he met DC group editor of creative services Neil Pozner. "He really liked my stuff and kept putting it under the noses of the people at DC. One day I got a call from DC, and they

Mike Wieringo (and his brew of choice, right) have helped bring the Flash (above) into the spotlight.

wanted to know if I wanted to do some work."

Wieringo cut his pro teeth on a *Justice League Quarterly* story in issue #11, followed by a second *JLQ* tale in #12.

"Then [editor Brian Augustyn] asked me to try out for *Flash*," he continues, adding that he has Pozner's help to thank for this opportunity. "So I did a couple of sample pages of the Flash running, sent them in, and they offered me the book," which he drew from #80 to September's #0 issue, except for a few fill-in issues in between. "Right now I'm working on a *Rogue* mini-series for Marvel, and after that, I'm going to take over the *Robin* book." Regarding that popular series, the artist says, "I want to make it as visually exciting as possible. Chuck Dixon writes very open scripts, so there will be room for lots of action."

Wieringo, who cites doing a Superman book as his dream project, does a self-critique of his credits to date. "I cringe when I look back at the first few issues of *Flash*. The first issue of *Rogue* is pretty sharp-looking. Doing *Rogue* was a little intimidating at first, because the basic tone of the books are dark and gritty, and my stuff tends to be a little cartoony. But once I finished that first issue, the editors decided to lighten up on the grim and gritty."

The pencil pusher turns his modest face to the light when assessing his current status as a rising star. "At this point, I'm not super-proud of any one thing I've done. But I am proud, in a general sort of way, of working in comics. Everything I do, I just try to do a little bit better, and I ultimately believe that's how readers see my career and work to this point."

Travis Charest

Travis Charest believes in giving credit where credit is due. And the credit for Charest's magical pencil lines, is the "gene milkshake."

"My mother and sister have artistic talent, too," he says, "so I've got to figure that it's all in the chromosomes."

Charest, currently gearing up for a long run on Image Comics's *WildC.A.T.s* —until Jim Lee returns from his sabbatical—has always been interested in drawing, but "was never really big on comic books.

"I grew up on a farm [in Edmonton]," offers the Canadian-born Charest, who now resides in San Diego, Calif., as his reason for not going ga-ga for comics. "So I was sort of isolated from all that stuff."

"The main reason I got into comics was that the only thing I could do real well was draw. I had already been through a number of dead-end jobs, and it finally dawned on me that 'Hey! I should really be doing something with my life.'"

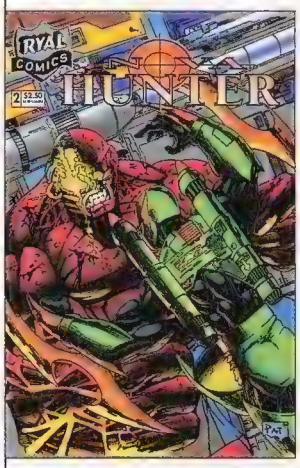
In an odyssey conspicuous by its shortness, Charest sent some samples off to DC Comics. Quicker than a shake of a lamb's tail, the telephone rang. It was the folks at DC bearing gifts.

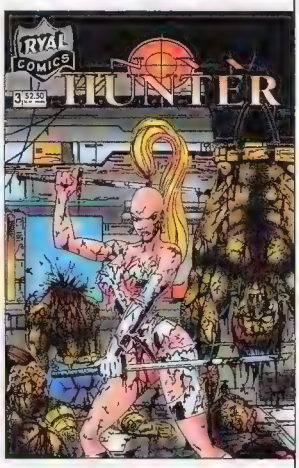
"The first thing I did for DC was this really bad *Flash* story," he chuckles. "Then I did a *Flash* annual which was a little better. *Flash Annual* #5 was my first real thing. The other stuff I did is not even worth mentioning. Then I did a Hulk story that was really bad [in *Incredible Hulk Annual* #18]. Then I did four issues of *Darkstars* [#4-#7]. I haven't really been in this long, so my laundry list is really short."

Charest's seeming inconsistency was rewarded when Jim Lee rang him up with a call to sign up for a tour of duty with *WildC.A.T.s*—first with *WildC.A.T.s Special* #1, and

GEN13, WILDC.A.T.S AND ALL RELATED CHARACTERS ™ & © AEGIS ENTERTAINMENT INC.

Travis Charest (below) filling Jim Lee's shoes on WildC.A.T.s (left).





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Another example of Charest's popular rendition of WildC.A.T.s.

now with the ongoing monthly. Charest is the first to admit that luck has had a lot to do with his sudden climb up the comic book ladder.

"I've kind of prepared myself for the big crash," he admits. "I've had an awful lot of good things happen to me in a relatively short period of time. I'm kind of waiting for the other shoe to drop. I was worried when I came over to *WildC.A.T.s* about how the fans of an established book would react to a new artist taking over. So far, the reception to my stuff has been pretty good."

The artist, at this point, feels his drawing style is in a state of transition. "At this point, I would say that my style is a little different from what the previous artist on the book did. I hope I have a distinctive style. I don't think I'm doing anything that is off-the-wall crazy. Ultimately, I just want to do my own thing. I don't want to end up lumped into the category of people who draw like somebody else."

Charest's comic book dream is "a good run with Batman," but at this point he is quite content with "a good run on *WildC.A.T.s*."

"After that, I have no idea what the future will bring. Right now, I'm just concentrating on the present."

He is aware that some might find his "babe in the woods" stance a tad annoying, but says in his defense that it's all Greek to him.

"I basically got thrown into this industry without knowing anything about it. When I was doing *Darkstars*, it was as simple for me as sitting at a desk with a pencil. Since then, I've discovered things about comics that I never knew before. It's been on-the-job training, and I think, because hardly anyone knows who I am, I'm able to get away with moving along at my own pace. It's been amazing to me.

"Just the idea of being put on *WildC.A.T.s*—it's like 'Holy smoke! I hope you guys know what you're doing!'"

J. Scott Campbell landed with a huge splash in '94 with Images Gen13.

J. Scott Campbell

When comic book retailers see J. Scott Campbell coming through the door, they roll their eyes. Not so much because the fan-turned-pro will drive a hard bargain, it's just that Campbell's collecting habits run slightly against the grain.

"I collect comics for the art, not the title," he declares. "It's not so bad now, but when I was a kid, collecting by artist rather than title made getting the books I wanted kind of difficult at times."

Campbell, currently handling the art and co-plotting tasks for *Gen13*, was heavily into cartoons at an early age, "but not into comic books." The illustrator saw the light during his teenage years when he visited a friend's house.

The friend pulled out *X-Men Annual* #10, with artwork by Arthur Adams, "and I immediately went nuts over the book. That book had such detail. The art was fantastic. It just started me going. It just turned me around. All of a sudden I wanted to do this, and I felt I could."

Following graduation from high school in Aurora, Colo., Campbell had become good enough to begin doing freelance commercial art jobs. But his creative heart had already given itself over to the paneled page, and so, with the 1993 San Diego Comic Con looming large on the horizon, Campbell made ready a suitcase with some samples and prepared to make the trek to the place where the pros play.

"But just before I left, the second issue of *WildC.A.T.s* came out and it had this talent search advertisement by [creator] Jim Lee. I flipped out! They were actually asking for people to send stuff in. So, I put together a package that included a four-page *WildC.A.T.s* story and sent it in. A week and a half later the telephone rang, and it was Jim Lee. He said, 'I like your stuff. Do you want to move down to San Diego and draw some comic books?'"

Campbell made a run for the border and jumped right into Homage Studios's *Swimsuit Special* to the tune of two pin-ups. He followed those up with a stint on the *WildC.A.T.s Sourcebook* and *StormWatch* #0 before settling into the penciling and co-plotting chores on *Gen13*, which, he offers, will become an ongoing series beginning with a #1 issue around March or April of '95.

Campbell claims that *Gen13*'s emphasis on big, in-your-face panels has given him the opportunity to explore comic book detail in even greater depth. "With *Gen13*, I don't get much in the way of body types, so I've had

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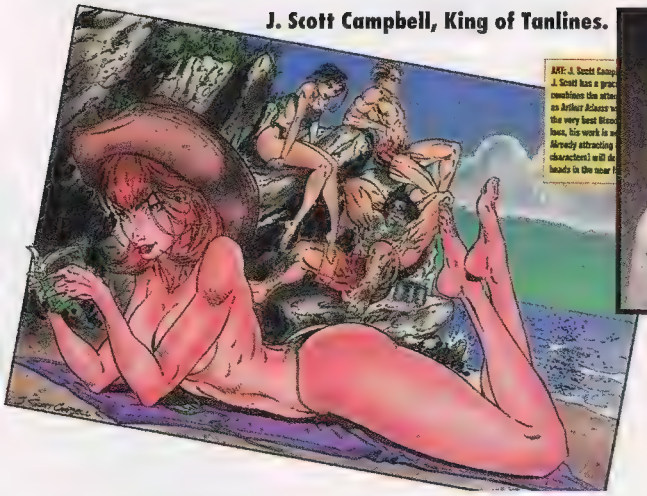
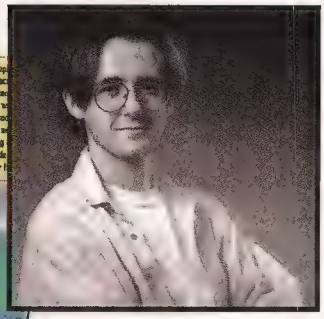
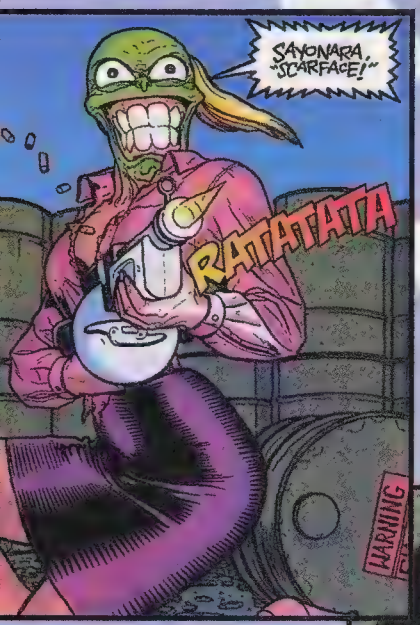


J. Scott Campbell, King of Tanlines.



to concentrate more on facial expressions. I'm big on different noses and eyes. It's especially challenging with female characters. It would be easy to differentiate between two female characters simply by giving them different hair styles. But I like to give them different facial expressions."

Campbell, ever the optimist, feels that the current generation of comic book artists will be able to stretch the envelope of illustration and design. "The big challenge will always be to come up with even more detail and more clever ways to lay out a page. I'll be honest with you, it's getting harder and harder to come up with new ideas. But I do think it is possible."



Doug Mahnke

As soon as Doug Mahnke could hold a pencil, he was drawing.

"To a large extent, it was my family's idea," says the artist who has given substance to Dark Horse Comics's *The Mask* and *The Mask Returns* mini-series, as well as the first five issues of an ongoing *Mask* series debuting in this February's "Mask Month."

"They wanted me to tow the line. Drawing was a good way of keeping out of trouble. I had some interesting directions going on in my life, and art was probably the best of them."

Mahnke, self-taught and proud of it, has been in the Dark Horse bullpen from the beginning of his career and claims that it has, to date, been a joy ride.

"Working with people like [writer John] Arcudi has been great," he enthuses. "I've been given some really nice scripts that really round things out for me. I've been fortunate in that I haven't been forced to step out into that mindless booktelling thing. The stuff I've done so far has involved real people who walk around in real clothes and drive real cars."

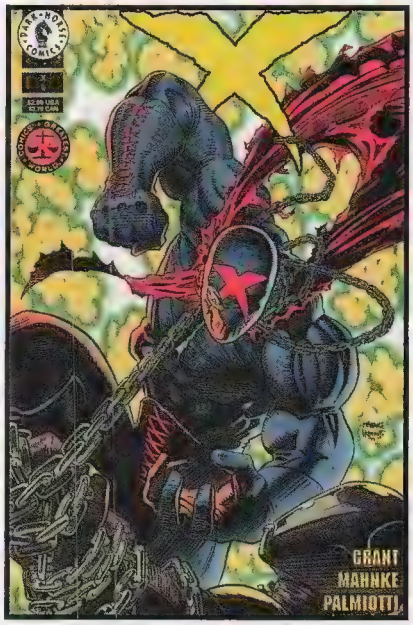
Mahnke began trying to crash the big show in his teens. By his own estimation, he was a bit lazy, and so he was not surprised at the response to his initial submissions. "I probably should have been trying a little bit harder. I was pretty haphazard. One of my first portfolio submissions came back with a note that said, 'Are you kidding?' After a while, I just shelved the idea of doing comic books."

The illustrator hit the road, living the rough-and-tumble life of a carnival T-shirt artist. "For a long time, I just lived the free-and-easy life. Then I met my wife, and I said, 'Gee! I have to do something now.'"

Mahnke put together a "more serious portfolio" that caught the interest of the folks at Dark Horse, who gave him his first pro work on an eight-page "Homicide" story in *Dark Horse Presents* #29.

"After that, I sharpened my tools, treaded water for a while, and then did the Mask during the avant-garde *Mayhem* days," recalls Mahnke. "Then I did the first four-issue *Mask* mini-series."

Having a few projects on his plate for the future, Mahnke's recent effort was five issues for Dark Horse's Comics' Greatest World title, *X*. "I enjoyed doing *X*, especially since it was a departure from what I was doing before. From an artistic standpoint, I got to break out a little bit. Over the course of the issues I did, I thought I got better; I was picking up [on] how to do dynamic comic book storytelling stuff. I'm not accustomed to drawing books with a multitude of characters and constant action; almost everything I've done has been really story-driven. I do like action and violence as much as the next guy, and the chance to draw something really dynamic or explosive has always appealed to me."



Mahnke, who currently resides in Minneapolis, Minn., also did the artwork for *X* #9, and particularly favors *X* #5. "I feel I'm just starting to solidify what I term my own work," he says, reflecting a budding philosophy. "My

Doug Manke (right) puts a female Mask (above) and X (above right) knee-deep in action.

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skills as a penciler have started to pick up. I see a lot out there, and I just try to absorb what I see. I don't want to become anybody. I'm easily influenced. With me, it's like I see something and say, 'Man! That's really cool! How do they do that?'"

Aaron Lopresti

Aaron Lopresti is a firm believer in planning ahead. And when the Portland, Ore., native, who had been drawing since age two, reached the ripe old age of 10, he literally had a game plan.

"I was going to be a comic book artist," says Lopresti. "It was as simple as that."

Well, not quite *that* simple. For Lopresti made the mistake of taking a film class in high school. Then he made the even bigger blunder of making a small film that was quite good, and actually won an award.

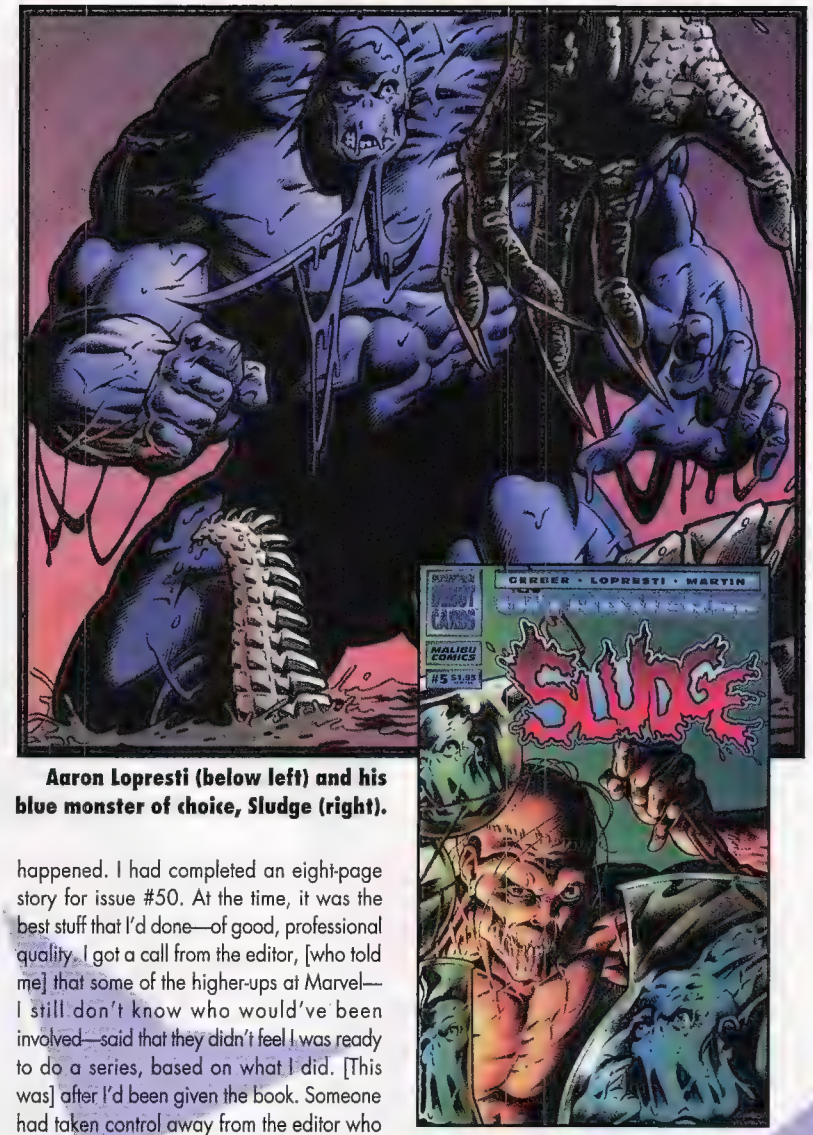
"I started thinking, 'Forget comic books, I'm going to be Mr. Movie!'" remembers Lopresti. "After graduation, I went to USC film school and then burned out on Hollywood really fast. That's when I started thinking that maybe this comic book thing wasn't such a bad idea."

The self-taught artist created a 22-page sample Spider-Man story; he then took off for the 1989 San Diego Comic Con, where he ran into a receptive soul in Marvel's editor Terry Kavanagh.

His first job was an eight-page assignment in *Marvel Comics Presents* #39, and eventually got a regular gig doing Marvel's satirical *What The...?* "Unfortunately, I found myself getting pigeonholed as a humor artist and I couldn't get any superhero work."

One day, after a particularly frustrating day in the Marvel Bullpen, Lopresti went home and turned out a five-page Hulk/Wolverine sample. Marvel brass took the hint and "some Venom work and Spider-Man backups" came his way. But when Marvel offered Lopresti the ongoing *She-Hulk* after writer/artist John Byrne left it a second time, and then unexpectedly took it away, the artist saw red.

"To this date, I'm still not exactly sure what happened. I had completed an eight-page story for issue #50. At the time, it was the best stuff that I'd done—of good, professional quality. I got a call from the editor, [who told me] that some of the higher-ups at Marvel—I still don't know who would've been involved—said that they didn't feel I was ready to do a series, based on what I did. [This was] after I'd been given the book. Someone had taken control away from the editor who gave me the job. It's my understanding that they had someone else that they wanted to plug in there, to do the job." The story has yet to see print.



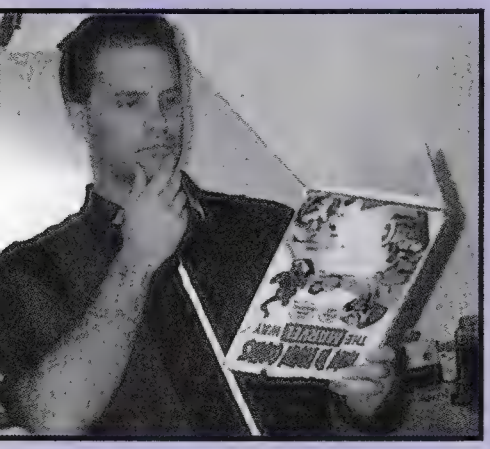
Aaron Lopresti (below left) and his blue monster of choice, Sludge (right).

SLUDGE ™ & © MALIBU COMICS ENTERTAINMENT INC.

The editor in question, Renée Witterstaetter, now an editor at Topps Comics, declined to comment on the situation, as did spokespersons for Marvel.

And then he got a call from Malibu Comics and it offered him "just about anything on their roster," he says.

Lopresti took on the Ultraverse imprint's *Sludge* with writer Steve Gerber, and later *Lord Pumpkin* #0 with writer Dan Danko. "I'm particularly proud of *Sludge* #5," a story in which the hero battles a creature who was also once a man, but became monstrous both physically and mentally. "All the elements came together on that issue. And I think *Lord Pumpkin* is some of the best stuff I've ever done." Lopresti is also working on the upcoming *Elven* mini-series, and is slated to draw half of the #1 issue of Malibu's *Godwheel* crossover slated for January.



The artist joins the line of creators who would kill to do a Batman book, but deviates from the norm when he adds *Captain America* to his wish list. "He was always one of my favorites. He's like the classic comic book hero, and I think it would be terrific to be able to do that book."

Lopresti is the first to admit that his rise to become a comic book professional has had more than its share of bumps and wrong turns. Consequently, he claims adversity as a key element involved with his hanging in for the long haul.

"I've always felt that perseverance will get you farther than talent will," he concludes. "You've got to be able to hang in there. My philosophy is confidence without arrogance. You have to feel it inside, and know that you're good enough to make it." ☆

Marc Shapiro. Freelance journalist. Wife. Daughter. Two cats. One dog. Film rights available.

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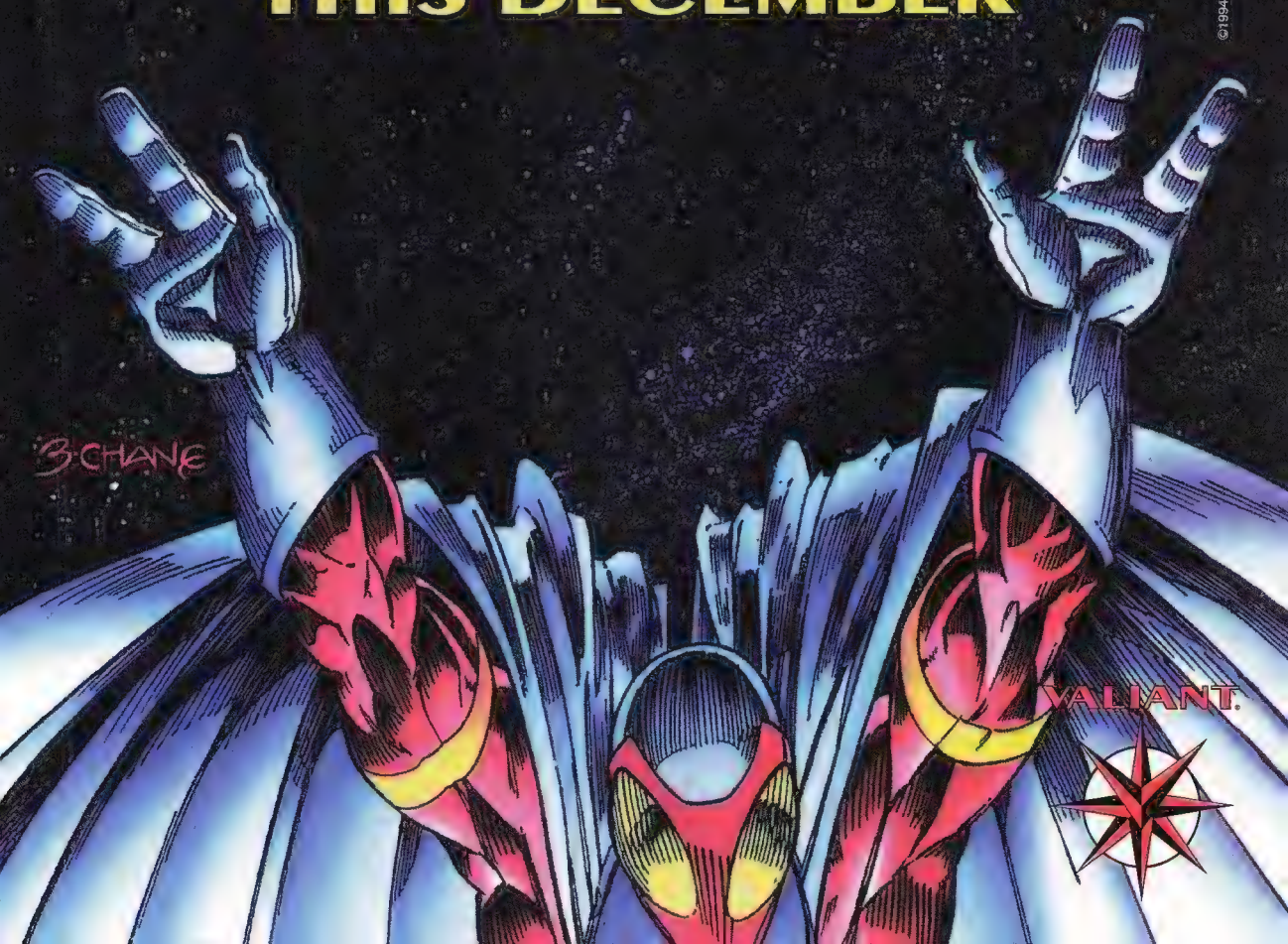

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CAPCOM

Roundtable

Tackling the hot topics of comicdom with a handful of the industry's most prominent writers, artists, and editors.

By Paul J. Grant

Jim Shooter told me, "In this business, we're all fans. We're always talking about this stuff." So when the editors of *Wizard* gave me a list of questions and a group of people to pose them to, I knew I'd get some provocative responses. Space limitations led me to delete some duplicative answers and to abridge others, but the opinions of the participants still shine through.

Our distinguished panelists include: Vertigo executive editor Karen Berger, writer/artist John Byrne (*John Byrne's Next Men*), artist Greg Capullo (*Angela*), writer Peter David (*The Incredible Hulk, Aquaman*), writer Jo Duffy (*Barb Wire*), DC Comics group editor/writer Archie Goodwin (*Batman: Night Cries*), artist Tom Grummett (*Superboy*), writer Gerard Jones (*Prime, UltraForce*), writer/artist/publisher Erik Larsen (*The Savage Dragon*, Image Comics), writer/inker Karl Kesel (*Adventures of Superman*), writer/artist Frank Miller (*Sin City*), artist John Romita Jr. (*Punisher/Batman: Deadly Knights*), artist Alex Ross (*Marvels*), Defiant editor-in-chief/writer Jim Shooter (*Warriors of Plasm*), writer/artist/publisher Jeff Smith (*Bone*, Cartoon Books), and Malibu Comics editor-in-chief/writer Chris Ulm (*Rune*).

Name one thing you saw in the comic book industry this past year that was positive, and explain why you feel it was positive.

GERARD JONES: The most positive thing I've seen lately was the success of [Jeff Smith's] *Bone*. It's funny, clear, kid-friendly, and textured for grown-ups; it's just plain good and it's an individual creation, not shaped by second-guessing the market. And damned if it isn't outselling most of the factory product out there. So, maybe there's hope for fresh approaches.

PETER DAVID: If nothing else, the success of *Bone* gives me a hope in hell for the success of the Claypool Comics line. [Editor's note: Claypool publishes David's *Soul Searchers and Company* series.]

JO DUFFY: Some very good movies—with surprisingly high degrees of creator input, like *The Crow* and *The Mask*—have been done about comic book characters...and not by publishers owned by movie studios. It really helps the public appreciate that we are a legitimate and vital medium.

JOHN BYRNE: It's probably what most people see as the most negative thing of the last year, and that's the implosion. It's positive because most of the speculators are gone, and I think the speculators have done more damage to the industry than almost any other single event of the last 70 years.

JOHN ROMITA JR.: For four or five years, the speculators were controlling the industry, whether they knew it or not, by declaring what was valuable, and they didn't know squat about what had quality.

ARCHIE GOODWIN: We're left with collectors who are also readers. I have nothing against collecting, but I think having people really like what they're collecting, and not just seeking the next hot item, makes for a much healthier interest in comics.

JIM SHOOTER: I think we saw a new focus on entertainment. I think a lot of publishers and creators have started realizing that if you persist in being in the business of creating collectibles, you basically are putting yourself in the hula hoop business. Sooner or later, the fad will be over and you'll be gone. But the entertainment business has always been there, and probably always will.

TOM GRUMMETT: Comics are beginning to get more diverse again in terms of content, after a long time of being only superheroes. There's a greater selection to choose from.

JEFF SMITH: One thing I noticed was a diversity of clientele. I saw a lot more women of all ages. I saw a lot more families. I think the audience for comics is changing.

FRANK MILLER: We saw a bunch of artists actually starting to do their dream projects instead of just talking about them—meaning new creator-owned comics where the artists are more committed than ever before, and where the readers can expect them to stick with them and do the best they can.

GREG CAPULLO: There have been pay increases for creators at some of the larger companies. Hopefully, the higher-ups will continue on the road to enlightenment and realize that the character isn't more important than its creators.

CHRIS ULM: There are more than two publishers that count these days, and with more publishers, individual creators benefit, because there's more competition for their services.

If you could change one thing about the comic book industry, what would it be?

SHOOTER: If we're talking magic wand stuff, the one change I'd make would be to institute honor. We're a very small community, and there's an outrageous amount of lying, cheating, stealing, back-biting, two-timing, and generally childish, reprehensible behavior [that] goes on.

DAVID: Well—he says, tongue planted firmly in cheek—I'd like to change the diapers of some of the industry's more infantile members at various companies. But I'll leave that to someone else; I've already got all the crap I can deal with.

ROMITA JR.: I'd eliminate every ego, because that leads to so many problems. There are so many little talents with large egos, and when little talents become huge talents, the egos grow geometrically.

DUFFY: I'd change the feeling that seems to be prevalent, particularly on the management side, that publishers and creators are in an adversarial relationship. I think it is incredibly stupid and self-defeating and destructive. We're all in this together. I think we'd all make a lot more money in a lot less time—and produce better work that we could be prouder of—if people didn't get caught up in playing their stupid little "get the other guy" games against

"Everybody needs feedback, even people who don't have active editors."

PHOTO BY AL ORTEGA

people they should be teaming up with.

BYRNE: I'd change the mentality of the people who buy and order comics, so the focus would be less on flash and dazzle, and the event of the month, and more on quality and storytelling.

KAREN BERGER: The one thing I'd change is the diversity of material that's published, and what customers would be interested in buying. Yes, we have more diversity than we did 10 years ago, but we still seem fueled by the superhero stuff.

ALEX ROSS: [The publishers] feel that the only type of material that will sell is pre-adolescent fantasy for boys.

JONES: I'd like to see little kids as new readers, so superhero comics wouldn't be narrowed to the aesthetic spectrum of adolescents, but could flower in the less pretentious—and much more fun—tastes of grade schoolers.

GRUMMETT: It's been a long time since there was anything really aimed towards the young readership, that gets kids excited about comics at the age *I* got excited about them. We have to look towards the future, and figure out where our next readers are coming from.

GOODWIN: I wish comics had been regarded as a medium for adults as well as for children right from the inception. If they had been, at least in the way comic strips were, a lot of other things that dog comics now—the lack of variety in subject matter, creators' rights—probably would have been dealt with sooner and perhaps better.

ERIK LARSEN: I miss the element of surprise comics used to have. And now with the big catalogues telling you what's going to be happening four months from now, you've lost that.

CAPULLO: I'd end the practice of market-glutting. The whole idea of putting a mass of product out for the sole purpose of taking away shelf space from a competitor is [ridiculous]. To knowingly put out garbage demonstrates a total lack of concern for the industry and its future.

Besides the obvious, what are some advantages of creator ownership of a project over publisher ownership?

PHOTO BY AL ORTEGA

"We have to look towards the future, and figure out where our next readers are coming from."

TOM GRUMMETT

BYRNE: I assume the obvious means money and control. I'm the only one who can screw it up. There's no chance I'll pick up a copy of some other comic and find something in there that has an effect on one of the characters I'm working on.

MILLER: There are advantages for the readers and retailers, too. People always wonder why creators leave books. You're much less likely to see Paul Chadwick leave *Concrete* or see me leave *Sin City* than you are to see somebody leave *Daredevil* or *Spider-Man*, because they have no long-term investment in it and can be fired at the editor's whim, no matter how well the book's selling.

What are some disadvantages?

LARSEN: If you're going through a publisher who does not have a large financial stake in it, there's less incentive for them to push that project over something which they own.

BYRNE: The only real disadvantage is you can get a lot of drek, because absolute power can corrupt.

MILLER: You can go all out on a limb by yourself, and you don't have the advantage of 30 to 60 years of history behind a character, so you really get to see how people like it or not. You also have to fight a lot harder to get them to pick it up in the first place.

Under what circumstances would you go back to doing work-for-hire projects?

MILLER: I never say never, but it would be hard to get me right now. I'm having too much fun doing what I'm doing. But you never know when I might get the itch. I may do the Superman comic I want to do someday.

LARSEN: I hope not, but if the market crashes, I'll be doing whatever it takes to pay the rent.

BYRNE: Work-for-hire is not an anath-

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ema to me. It's merely another way of doing it. There are still lots of toys out there that I want to play with, and many can only be played with in a work-for-hire capacity. What we-who-have-sallied-forth-into-other-realms and are now sticking toes back into the work-for-hire field are doing, is trying to tweak the set-up so it more closely corresponds to what we've experienced elsewhere. I can say, "I want a better deal, because I know what the real world is like, and what it costs you to produce a comic book, and you can afford to give me more money and greater creative freedom."

What has changed most about the creative process and its execution in the past several years?

JONES: The biggest changes I've seen have been the increased emphasis on line-wide identity, the consequent increase in the involvement—and the blood pressure—of editors, and an almost paradoxical jitteriness about "keeping up" and "staying ahead." That means lots of stunts and frequent changes of direction. *Green Lantern: Mosaic* was canceled because it didn't fit the new unified "feel" of the DC Universe; not because of sales, which were good. I quit *Green Lantern* after four years because the editor and I were on the verge of strangling each other over what to do with the mandated new direction.

DUFFY: Since the late 1980s, companies have felt that the editor and publisher are the author, and the writer and artist are just an interchangeable pair of hands who can be dispensed with at any time, particularly if they start getting too hot. Most editors are editors because they're not very good creators, and to put a failure in charge of the process sets a very low ceiling on how high anyone is ever going to be permitted to soar with their talent.

MILLER: The biggest change has been the breakdown of the factory system, and the rise of more people who are more deeply tied to their work from conception through execution through publication, and even into marketing. This commitment and involvement by cartoonists is, I think, the only route towards better comics.

ULM: The direct market has freed creators to work with whomever they wish and to tell the stories they care to tell. While comics has always been a collaborative artform, there is far less interference with an initial vision in comics than in any other commercial medium.

GOODWIN: The last few years have seen a very dynamic and exciting new way of approaching the visuals and the visual storytelling in comics. I know a lot of people gripe about pin-ups and every page being done to be resold as original art, but I think it also made the books more interesting to new readers and also made comics a lot more competitive with video games and movies.

CAPULLO: The storytelling has become more flamboyant and more free. You're seeing a lot more playing with the layout of the page. You've got more cinematic styles.

SHOOTER: When Image Comics came along, with all the flash and style, it was a revolutionary development. Now the pendulum seems to be swinging back towards content.

GRUMMETT: There's a lot more attention being paid to the story you're telling. The artwork is still important, but you have to have a good story to back it up, and that's coming across more and more.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DEFIANT COMICS

"I think a lot of publishers and creators have started realizing that if you persist in being in the business of creating collectibles, you basically are putting yourself in the hula hoop business."

JIM SHOOTER

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"The biggest change has been the breakdown of the factory system, and the rise of more people who are more deeply tied to their work from conception through execution through publication, and even into marketing."

FRANK MILLER

DAVID: I've seen the elevation of the artist to the point where some idiots actually believe that the artist is the most important person in the creative process.

Who *is* the single most important person in the creative process: writer, artist, or editor?

DAVID: The artist. No, really. When you're talking about comics, you're talking about a visual medium. It won't help if you have the best writer in the world, if the art is impossible to look at.

ROSS: But if there's a lack of substance to the story, it's just a waste of your time. I feel that between the artist and the writer, they need to balance each other.

SHOOTER: It's a dumb question. It's like asking what's the most important part of an internal combustion engine?

CAPULLO: What doesn't belong in this picture? That's like asking what quenches your thirst better: water, soda, or a glass? I don't think the editor belongs there. I may be biased, but I think the artist is more important because comics is a visual medium.

BYRNE: Once upon a time, it was the editor, when he came up with the story. Now, in terms of the overall impact, it's got to be the artist.

BERGER: Unless you're a writer/artist/publisher, comics is a collaborative medium. All three people contribute greatly. As far as Vertigo is concerned, because it's geared more for adults, I'd have to notch up the writer a bit more than the artist.

KARL KESEL: It's the writer, if I'm writing it; the inker, if I'm inking it. Seriously, though, I'm sure everyone knows that each case is totally different, and no one person can ever be singled out across the board.

GRUMMETT: I really like the collaborative aspect of working with a writer, like with Karl Kesel on *Superboy*, where we work very closely together. The line is very blurred as far as that goes. But when they're doing their job right, it's the editor.

JONES: It's entirely dependent on the project. Take away nearly any Superman writer or artist and the Superman family probably won't change much, but take away Mike Carlin and see what you get. *Uncanny X-Men* felt remarkably consistent as long as Chris Claremont was writing it, through many changes of artists and editors.

SMITH: Everyone whose work I really like is the writer and the artist and the editor, so I don't really think one is more important than the other. All of the people in my personal pantheon of "great," both wrote it and drew it, which is why I aspire to do that as well.

GOODWIN: Ideally, they're all equally important, and for the very best artistic comic, they would all be the same person, but comics are never ideal. It usually depends on who's the stronger creative force—more than likely, the writer or artist.

What role should the editor play in the creative process?

DAVID: An editor should be a Boy Scout: always prepared, good with knotty problems, cheerful, and obedient. I'd settle for any three out of the four.

PHOTO BY AL ORTEGA

JONES: An editor can be a royal pain, but he can also be an invaluable collaborator, cheerleader, critic, and buffer from the lunacies of the business. Ultimately, though, I think the editor has to know when to step back. He has to be able to say, "I'm hiring this guy to write these series, so the stories have to be his." As soon as an editor begins to view the writer as a piece-worker, delivering bits of story to the editor's specifications, he's killing the process.

KESEL: Editors should do whatever it takes to make you steadily produce better work than you thought you were capable of.

DUFFY: The editor's job is to keep people from making mistakes, and when working with a writer-artist team, to be the bad guy and smooth things over. My definition of editor, based on the way I tried to do it for ten years, is so time-consuming that it doesn't leave any room left over for sitting behind your desk on your brains, pretending that you're the one who made the X-Men fabulous for 17 years or you're the reason that people buy *Batman*.

ROMITA JR.: He's got to be the buffer between sensibility and the end product, because sometimes a writer without an editor will put things in [a story] that may not be appropriate to either the chronological order of things, or maybe the Comics Code. The editor knows the parameters, and that's his main point. Without an editor, you could be like a bull in a china shop, so to speak.

GRUMMETT: A good editor has to play many roles—traffic cop, father confessor, the guy who cracks the whip—and still be on good terms with everybody he's working with.

In a creator-owned project, should there be an outside editor? If so, what kind of power should he or she have?

BYRNE: Everybody needs somebody to talk to, and somebody who'll say, "Is that really the best possible thing for you to do?" What makes a difference for a creator-owned project is that I can say no, whereas on a work-for-hire job, the editor has absolute power.

SMITH: The editor should have no power, absolutely none. Let me put that another way: an editor should have zero power. At most, an editor should be in a lateral position to the creative team. They may offer a suggestion, but should have no say in what actually goes into the work.

MILLER: I find a good editor to be invaluable in watching my back and giving me another pair of eyes looking at my work, but the old system, where the editor is regarded as the primary creator, is there only to keep the artists from owning their work, or claiming any proprietary or territorial right over it.

Is it important to have someone detached from the project look for problem spots?

SMITH: Yes, it absolutely is, and not just for spelling checks, either. An outside person that you trust has to be there, to see that you've communicated what you set out to communicate. There has to be someone who doesn't know what you meant, who can look at it and ask, "What did you mean here?"

BYRNE: It's important to have someone look at it with a detached eye. Oooh, what an image! Sounds like an EC cover.

BERGER: Everybody needs feedback, even people who don't have active editors. An objective voice and opinion is so important, because you can get very close to your work and not realize the flaws in it, or even the positive things.

As an editor, how do you justify your role in the process? Why is it necessary that there be an editor?

ULM: It is only important that you have a *good* editor. They can make a good project better and a great project incredible. Bad editors, however, can destroy a project.

SHOOTER: On the stuff that takes place in a universe, the editor is essential, because he provides central control in getting a large group of people working towards a common purpose. A lot of creator-owned properties have done just fine without someone looking over the creator's shoulder. However, at Epic Comics [during his tenure], a lot of projects came in that were wonderfully good, because Archie Goodwin was there to help guide the creators.

What do you do as an editor?

BERGER: I've always viewed myself very much like a producer/director. The producer puts the whole package together, and works with the different creative talents. The director steers the vision of the writer so the best possible work is produced.

SHOOTER: You take a lot of people and try to forge them into one common force. The film director Michael Winner always used to say that "A team effort is a lot of people doing what I tell them to." I'm not quite that dictatorial, and I think one of the beauties of comics is that you don't have to be.

GOODWIN: I do a jillion things that hopefully are totally unnoticeable by the time the book comes out. I think I facilitate. I try to set up a creative atmosphere for the creative talents. I try to represent them to the publisher, and the publisher to the creative team. I try to traffic-manage and see the books through the process, and be a sort of surrogate audience for the creators when they may move a little off-track.

ULM: My goal as an editor is to help shape a creative direction by choosing compatible creative teams and serving as a sounding board. I really enjoy seeing where a writer or artist wants to go with a given idea, and then making suggestions to make that idea a reality.

How closely should an editor work with the writer/artist team?

ULM: Editors should work with a creative team at every step. They should also respect the differences among creators. No two writers write exactly the same way. The same applies to pencilers or inkers or letterers. The editor's job is to figure out what works best with the individuals involved.

GOODWIN: If you've got a very good team functioning well, the editor can stand back and let them do what they do best, and watch it and ask some questions as it goes along. Other times, some writers and artists need a lot of input and help as they do a book. Sometimes, if nothing else, they need a cheering squad.

SHOOTER: Even if the editor is merely shaking his head "Yes," and saying, "That's wonderful, Mr. Steranko, we'll just print that as it is," I think it's very important that he be very closely involved with the creative process.

How closely should an editor monitor character continuity?

SHOOTER: Very closely; otherwise, it would be like letting a bunch of people fire [guns] in the dark for a while, and then turning on the light and seeing if anyone hit the target.

ULM: I like continuity in a "universe" approach to comics. In Ultraverse, there is a high level of cooperation among the various elements of a team. For example, all guest appearances are approved by the original creators of the character, which tends to keep continuity honest.

> "I miss the element of surprise comics used to have. And now with the big catalogues telling you what's going to be happening four months from now, you've lost that."
>
> JOHN LANSDALE

GOODWIN: In a place like the DC Universe, character continuity is obviously very important to us, so we have to monitor it closely. The overall goal should still be to tell stories that are exciting and convincing, and part of the popularity of character continuity is that it adds to the reality that you're trying to create. What you have to be there for, is to monitor stupid mistakes that break the reality you're trying to establish.

Under which conditions should that continuity be altered?

GOODWIN: Eventually, you may reach a point with some continuity where it becomes so unwieldy, so convoluted, so twisted and contradictory, that you may then have to drastically alter it in some way. One of the amazing things about doing *Zero Hour* was setting up a believable premise for explaining a lot of contradictions in DC continuity, in such a way that future gen-

erations of readers would not have to go back and read 60 years of DC history, just to understand what we had done.

In doing work-for-hire, have you felt pressure from above to change your style in order to suit a certain audience?

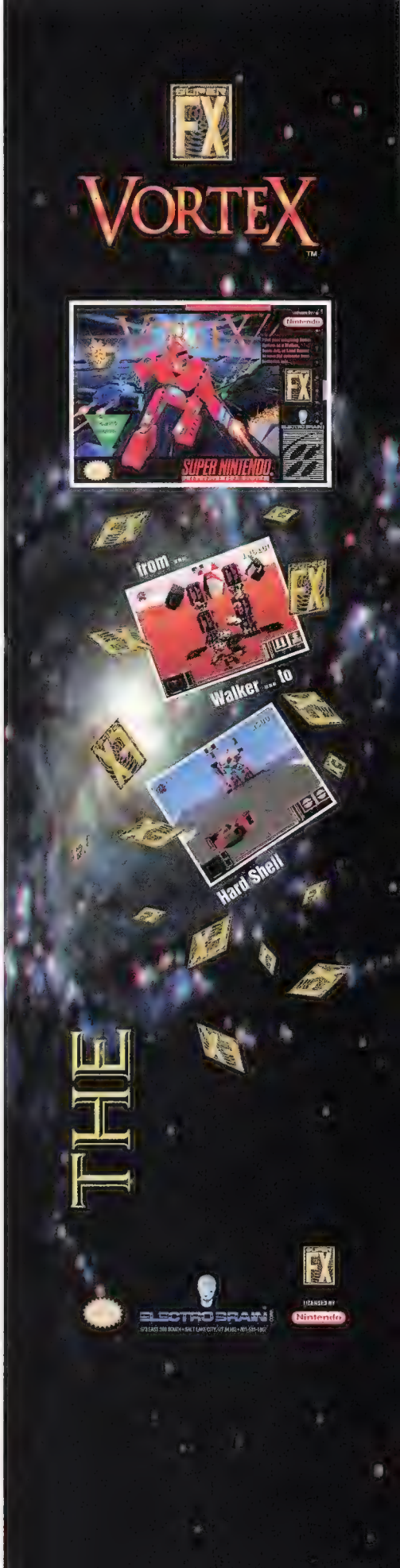
DAVID: No. Although there have been suggestions that I learn a useful trade, such as truck driving or air conditioner repair...just in case. I'm not sure whether to be concerned about that.

JONES: Not that much. It was only in the late, ugly days of *Green Lantern* that I found myself being told to write more like the Image guys—a baffling notion indeed—or to do more fights.

DUFFY: There's been an attempt to apply that kind of pressure, but I don't yield to it. People who hire me have to know that they're getting *me*, and [that] I'm a better writer than any editor is ever going to try to turn me into. You can't get good creativity by trying to second-guess a market.

ROMITA JR.: Never, not as long as I've worked for Marvel Comics. It's always been very accommodating to me, and whatever I've put out it's liked.

ROSS: I haven't felt any pressure, and I was fortunate on *Marvels* in that no one paid any attention to the project until it was too late. However, I know



they're looking for artists to paint like I do, but more dynamically. I know my editor has been going around making this request from artists' representatives, so it seems they would have preferred my style to have been slightly altered to fit some kind of standard that they're used to.

KESEL: Work-for-hire always entails doing what your bosses want. On the other hand, I usually get a certain job because I naturally produce the sort of work that [my] boss wants. More often than not, I've pressured myself more than anyone "from above" has.

CAPULLO: You wouldn't draw Barbie the same way you draw Violator, so I'm not changing my style; I'm changing my approach to suit the needs of the book. When I drew [Marvel's] *X-Force*, [editor] Bob Harras said, "Why don't you make your characters a bit bulkier?" and that was the most direction I've ever received. But I've been lucky. I have a friend whose editor is putting him through hell, pulling him this way and that way, and I think that sucks. The editor should try to nurture whatever style the guy has, instead of trying to change it.

What qualities make a good comic book artist?

JONES: Writers have a skewed view of artists. If it's a monthly comic, I want someone who's going to deliver on deadline more than anything. I want him or her to do characters' facial expressions and body language well, and draw interesting women who don't all look alike and strike poses out of Victoria's Secret™. I want somebody who doesn't monkey around with my plotting and pacing, and who'll leave room for the word balloons! It's only after I check off all those points, that I look to see whether the artist is dynamic, and powerful, and individualistic, and does good anatomy, even though I know damn well that's what's going to sell comics.

KESEL: Storytelling is number one. Beyond that, I value naturalism, meaning that the characters, regardless of the style they're drawn in, are totally at ease in their environment.

ROSS: The ability to draw beyond what your limited personal experience shows you, to encompass more of the world than what you've actually lived of it.

CAPULLO: A real solid foundation in the basics: anatomy, proportion, perspective, knowledge of light and dark. And having your own way of applying that knowledge to tell a good story.

GRUMMETT: Aside from skill, I would say discipline—the ability to sit down at a table every day and produce the work. That's a quality that I find admirable in any comic book artist.

DAVID: The belief that the writer is the most important person in the creative process. That, and turning in artwork on time. Thus, the extremely short list of good comic book artists...

DUFFY: A good comic book artist should be able to draw and tell a story visually...which is not the same thing. And if he's working with a collaborator, he should understand that things in the story are there for a reason. An artist has to have style, draftsmanship, and storytelling ability.

What qualities make a good comic book writer?

ROSS: Somebody who's not trying to write down [to the audience] for this medium.

CAPULLO: From an artist's standpoint, one that can give me intriguing storylines that help spark my imagination, and exciting material to draw. From a reader's perspective, a good writer is someone who can keep me coming back month after month, by developing the characters to the point where I care about them.

GRUMMETT: What I like is a strong visual sense, and I've been lucky in that regard. It makes the artist's job a lot easier if the writer can see in terms of pictures as well as words.

As an artist, how difficult is it to bring your vision "to the table," when you're at the end of the creative

"The most positive thing I've seen lately was the success of Bone. It's funny, clear, kid-friendly, and textured for grown-ups."

GERARD JONES

PHOTO BY AL ORTEGA

storytelling process?

ROMITA JR.: It's not difficult, but I've been doing this for 18 years. When you get hold of a story, you play with it and that's your job. There's a formula for telling a story; I know what I want to do most every time.

ROSS: If you're talking about vision, you often have that implanted before the script's even done, or you should have been collaborating from the time that the writer is formulating his ideas, and become just as much of a part of the genesis of the story as possible.

CAPULLO: My pencil and/or pen has the final say in the visual interpretation of what I've been given. Even though I'm working within the confines of a particular storyline, if I disagree with something that's been done, I may do it differently without even consulting with the writer—though I would prefer to. If you've got an experienced writer, he's usually flexible and receptive to the artist's vision.

GRUMMETT: Whenever I've run into something in a script that simply doesn't work visually, I've always felt that I can phone up the writer and say, "Maybe here's a way that we can do it instead."

What do you plan to do to make comics better in 1995?

KESEL: I can't promise I'm going to make them better, but I'm going to do everything I can to make them more fun.

ULM: The most important things I can do in '95 to make comics better, are to pick talented people with strong ideas, to give input where needed, and to stay out of the way! My job as the editor-in-chief is to set an environment in which creativity can flourish. I am very focused on continually increasing the quality of our comics. We have revamped our internal development process to shorten the time between conception and finished comic. We are increasing our editorial staff in order to spend more time with each project, and we are continuously improving both art and story with each new issue.

JONES: I've been recognizing that my workload's a little too big, and I've been doing too much stuff that I'm writing just because it's there, or because it pays. Right now, I'm in the process of figuring out what to drop, and I'm going to ship some energy into more personal work, especially creator-owned stuff that I can really put my best into. So, I'm going to try to get back to using whatever unique voice I've got, to put a little more variety into the business, instead of writing things that feel a lot like other people's work, and then bitching about how there isn't much variety in this business.

DUFFY: I'd like to do everything I can to convince people that it is a pointless waste of everybody's time and energy to be constantly picking fights with each other.

ROSS: All I can do is make sure that, while I still may be working within the superhero genre, what I work on—narratively and creatively—will be done not simply because superheroes is what everybody buys, but because I have something new to say about the genre. And when I feel I have nothing new to offer the genre, I will get out of it.

CAPULLO: The only thing that is within my power to do, and that is to constantly try to increase the quality of the artwork that I produce, and hopefully raise the standard around us in the art community.

BYRNE: I'm just going to do the best work I know how. Ultimately, that's all any of us can do to make comics better. ☆

Paul J. Grant is a Michigan-based freelance writer.

FANBOYS

Looking back to when today's comic book big shots were just plain ol' comic book fans.

by William A. Christensen & Mark Seifert

So you think you know everything there is to know about your favorite comic creators? You've collected every comic and read every interview they've done? Oh, you think so, do you? Do you *really*? Well, more than likely you've missed one of the most powerful and longest-lasting sections of comic book history: the letters page. Where else can you spout out your views and ask questions directly to the source, and get your answer in front of thousands of witnesses?

Many of today's professionals were fanboys/girls in their younger days, who wrote to *their* favorite comic books just like fans do today. Why, Warp Graphics's own *Elfquest* team of Wendy and Richard Pini owe their very marriage to a letters page in an old *Silver Surfer*. Wendy had one of her letters, along with her address, published in an issue of the original series. Richard responded to her directly, telling her which of her points he agreed and disagreed with. The two continued corresponding, exchanged phone numbers, and got hitched. So you see, even professionals were, and still are, fans at heart.

The following are letters (or excerpts from letters) written by comic fans who became professionals in the comics industry, listed by the comic in which that letter appeared. Test how much you really know about comic creators by selecting the correct letter writer from the choices following each letter. Because any person's influences and attitudes are apt to change over time, extra hints are provided for each letter writer. Good luck!

1. *Flash* #116 November 1960

Dear Editor,

As a follower of Flash since he originally wore Mercury's silver, winged cap and little red shoes, and as one of the first to believe that the new Flash is superior in appearance to the one introduced a couple of decades ago, I would like to offer a couple of suggestions.

First of all, I miss the three dimwits—Winky, Blinky, and Noddy. Though a little like the Three Stooges, they were hilarious nonetheless, and even in the excellent drawing style of your award-winning *Flash* artist, Carmine Infantino, I think they would fit in...

Hints: This writer/editor has worked for both Marvel and DC, and as is evident in this letter, is something of a comics historian. Furthermore, he was instrumental in the development of comics fandom in the 1960s.

a) Marv Wolfman
b) Roy Thomas
c) Dennis O'Neil
d) Kurt Busiek

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2. *Fantastic Four* #22 January 1964

Dear Stan and Jack,

When the tumult and the shouting have died, one fact will remain: it has been a great season for comic fandom. I have read all the latest mags you have put out, and overall, I'd say "Excellent." Greatest of the great, of course, was the *Fantastic Four Annual*. The story (Sub-Mariner vs. the Human Race) was, to say the least, everything you promised us, and more. This should go down in comic history as one of the greats of all time. Not only was the art superb (as usual), but the story was one of the most gripping, dramatic epics I have ever read anywhere. Above all, this story illustrates the little-known fact that Sub-Mariner is not as bad as he's thought to be. He has honor, and he was merely fighting for what he believes in. Next—*The Avengers*—great! That's one of the best magazines on the market today, and I hope it does as well as the *Fantastic Four* has done, and will continue to do so. The battles between the Hulk and Iron Man were nothing short of fabulous. Finally—*X-Men*! Overall, the mag was another great first. I really went for the story, and the artwork was good, except for the inking, and that was only fair. On the individual X-Men, I flipped over the Angel. Keep up the good work. You make comic reading a pleasure and an adventure.

Hints: This early Marvel enthusiast got to help revamp one of the titles he gushed over in this letter. He also did a Marvel Graphic Novel, which became a short-lived series from another company in the 1980s.

a) John Byrne
b) Chris Claremont
c) George Pérez
d) Dave Cockrum

3. *Real Fact Comics* #6 (DC Comics) January-February 1947

My parents welcome *Real Fact Comics* as wholeheartedly as I do.

Hints: You say that's not very much to go on? Well, this now-celebrated author is as unafraid to state his opinion today as he was almost 50 years ago. He has worked in comics, film, and TV. Paul Chadwick used the layouts of his intricate home to depict one of his characters's homes in an installment of *Concrete*.

a) Ray Bradbury
b) Harlan Ellison
c) Clive Barker
d) Joe R. Lansdale

4. *Weird Fantasy* #21 September-October 1953

...I certainly hope you continue adapting Ray Bradbury's stories. "King of the Gray Spaces" was wonderful. Al Feldstein has been doing a keen job of adapting them.

Hints: This science fiction and fantasy fan is now a writer/editor who's worked for Marvel, DC, King Features, and Warren Publishing, but his stint at Marvel/Epic is perhaps his biggest claim to fame.

a) Archie Goodwin
b) Julius Schwartz
c) Dick Giordano
d) Mike Carlin

5. *Amazing Spider-Man* #34 March 1966

Dear Stan and Steve,

Awright, you guys—I've had it! I've been reading Marvel mags for a good many years, and I've kept my mouth shut, but after reading *Spider-Man* #30, I decided that something should be said. Firstly, the issue was tremendous. I almost died at the last two panels on page five, but I was really shook up at the chain of events that happened between Peter and Betty...I believe that Peter and Betty should be married. (Not immediately, perhaps, but eventually.) It is well-known that Betty and Peter are in love, but Peter thinks he can never propose to her because of her prejudice against an adventuresome, Spider-Man type...I don't like one bit the looks of those dizzy spells Aunt May has been getting lately. If you're planning to have her "leave" Marvel as you've been doing with so many others, I shall personally sic the Destroyer, the Juggernaut, and Irving Forbush on every one of you. Before I fold, I want to say that long after all the Brand Echh comics have crumbled away into decaying, rancid dust, Marvel shall raise its mighty head up into the sky as a tribute to all the Marvelites in the world!

Hints: This Spider-Man fan's sense for characterization developed even further when he became a pro. He has self-published a long-running creator-owned series. He also graduated from M.I.T.

a) Todd McFarlane
b) John Byrne
c) Richard Pini
d) Dave Sim

6. *Flash* #166 December 1966

Dear Editor,

Flash #163 was simply beautiful, with only the cover keeping it from being a perfect issue. I'm not sure what was wrong with it, but it might have been the gigantic STOP!

But the inside, now that was great...

The only thing that really spoiled the issue for me was the Statement of Ownership. A magazine of *Flash*'s quality deserves more than 298,151 readers.

Hints: This writer/editor has worked for both Marvel and DC, and is also an authority on continuity fixes.

a) Marv Wolfman
b) Roy Thomas
c) Dennis O'Neil
d) Dan Jurgens

7. *Superman* #203 January 1968

I know I speak for all Canadian readers when I say, "Thank you for making us—and Expo '67—a part of *Superman* #200 with that wonderful tribute to our Centennial in the last panel."

Hints: This patriotic Canadian has been a fan favorite in the industry for several years. As a writer/artist, he also formed his own publishing company, is one of the industry's most outspoken creators, and is noted for doing parodies of other comics.

a) Todd McFarlane
b) John Byrne
c) Richard Pini
d) Dave Sim

8. *Batman* #207 December 1968

Dear Editor:

Having never really liked Bob Kane's artwork (except prior to the '60s), the only Batman adventures I read were in *Detective* when Infantino still took pencil and brush in hand. But now that Infantino has gone to that great, happy editorial ground on the top floor, I [have] remained Batman-less for many months. Out of sheer curiosity, I picked up *Batman* #204 to witness the new team of Robbings and Novick. And, well, I was more than slightly surprised at the results and must apologize for ever doubting the DC Dynasty of Comics...

Hints: This letter writer became an inker of note and also served as a letterer for a time. His enthusiasm for Batman paid off in a big way. After becoming a pro, he got to work on one of the most acclaimed projects involving the hero that the medium's ever seen.

a) John Workman
b) Terry Austin
c) Bob Layton
d) Klaus Janson

9. *Wonder Woman* #181 March-April 1969

...I vote that Wonder Woman becomes a non-super-powered agent of justice dressed in mod clothes, rather than a uniform, and devoted to breaking up spy rings and battling down-to-earth foes.

Hints: The writer must have been psychic, because the events he described did indeed come to pass for Wonder Woman at about this time. This writer/editor is probably most noted for forging the career of another major comics archetype, Captain America, in later years.

a) Marv Wolfman
b) Roy Thomas
c) Dennis O'Neil
d) Mark Gruenwald

10. *Amazing Spider-Man* #108 May 1972

Dear Stan and friends,

I have just read your issue of *The Amazing Spider-Man* (#103), an issue in many ways different from its predecessors. An issue of differences I feel are deserving of a few moments of my time, to let you know the opinions of at least one segment of your readership.

First, of course, is the most recent change in your prices...

So much for the complaints—on to #103. I must say that I was thoroughly impressed with this issue. Aside from the interjection of a few too many "now" phrases, the story was very well-executed. The characterization of J. Jonah Jameson was especially well-handled and much more three-dimensional than before. Also, the setting of the Savage Land is a pleasant change from our hero's usual big-city escapades. I rather wish Kraven hadn't been introduced at the end, though. The story had a very nice flavor up to this point, and I fear that it will now fall into the familiar superhero vs. super-villain rut...

Hints: This frequent letter writer went on to work on the title he wrote to, has worked for both Marvel and DC, and also had a long stint on *Iron Man*.

a) Todd McFarlane
b) Peter David
c) David Michelinie
d) Bob Layton

11. *X-Men* #104 April 1977

Dear Chris and Dave,

I love you both. I love your pencils and your typewriter. I love your armadillo. And most of all, I love the all-new X-Men. You've done it. I never thought I'd hear me say this, much less put it in writing, but I think I like them better than the originals. (OK, so maybe it helps that everyone has finally found a home.)

Sam Mandel has a right to his opinion, but anyone who could dislike this comic must be out of the Twilight Zone.

Hints: According to a past issue of *Wizard*, this letter writer landed a job at Marvel in the same year this letter saw print, and has recently won acclaim for work on a female antihero.

a) Jim Balent
b) Trina Robbins
c) Buzz
d) Jo Duffy

12. *Amazing Spider-Man* #169 June 1977

Gentlemen,

It's high time someone mentioned the fine job Ross Andru has been doing on *Spider-Man*. Not since Ditko has there been as conscientious a penciler on the strip, nor one as successful

in capturing the mood and style that made the strip the most popular of them all. Comic book fans are rarely as appreciative of honest craftsmanship as of flashy techniques or special effects, so the care and skill Mr. Andru has brought to the strip have gone largely unnoticed...

Hints: This eloquent letter writer has worked for Marvel, DC, and Valiant, and has an ongoing creator-owned project currently being published by Dark Horse as well.

a) Walt Simonson
b) Frank Miller
c) Steve Englehart
d) Steven Grant

13. *Amazing Spider-Man* #188

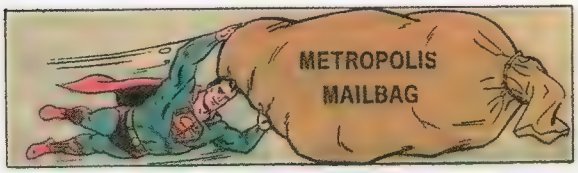
January 1979

Dear Marvel,

When Spider-Man first appeared on the comics scene, he was immediately a smash hit because (if we are to believe the hype) he dared to do what had never been done before—to be unpredictable, to have that funky element of real life that you never know what's going to happen next. Spider-Man is still the same as he was back then. But this is not such a good thing. Spidey is still daring to be different, but different from what superheroes were in 1960. He was unpredictable back then, but he has now established a record of doing "unpredictable" things over and over again. Speculating about what will happen next in *Spider-Man* is like wondering if the good guys will win on your seventh viewing of *Star Wars*. Spidey has degenerated into a red-and-blue Mego™ doll; other than the fact that he's a nice package, he's the same as most of the other superheroes around. He is no longer in the vanguard...

Hints: This person's knowledge of Marvel history has served him well on a recent Marvel mini-series. His interest in science fiction also came in handy on a Marvel project.

a) Roy Thomas
b) John Byrne
c) Alex Ross
d) Kurt Busiek



14. *Superman* #365 November 1981

Dear Editor:

"Is Superman Going...Going...Gone?" in *Superman* #360 was a very fine story. Why?

Well, for one thing, we got to see an entire story in which Superman didn't see the faces of his enemies or even find out why they were different people, personality-wise.

Cary Bates continues to turn out good stories for this magazine, but I have one criticism. Too many aliens have been battling Superman lately. I prefer down-to-Earth stories that involve major villains, and at the same time, give us plenty of characterization.

The ending to this story was good in a couple of ways. First, it showed how strong Superman is mentally, by fighting off his fears of doom, and second, lots of his inner strength was harnessed when he saw the broken picture of his adoptive mother. It's nice to see that the Kents have not been forgotten and still mean as much to Clark.

The tale of Krypton, "Day into Night—Night into Day," was also good, but I prefer tales of Superman 2020.

Anyway, thanks for another good issue.

Hints: This super-fan is a writer/artist who has worked for DC and Marvel. He has worked with major characters for both companies, developed a creator-owned character for a creator-owned imprint, helped create a major antihero for Marvel who eventually starred in his or her own title, and also worked on a major DC crossover event.

a) Dan Jurgens
b) Todd McFarlane
c) Rob Liefeld
d) Frank Miller

15. *Superman* #379 January 1983

Dear Editor,

During World War II, GIs read Superman comics sent over to them, and they were said to be an inspiration to the fighting man. But more importantly, Superman was a piece of America, a symbol of what they left behind. I finally understand what was meant by that!

When I was 16, I went over to Germany on an exchange program through my high school. I was young, alone, and missed my family and friends. I picked up a couple of Superman issues at a nearby American Air Force base, and from then on I was never as far from home as I thought. I sort of had a "big brother" and a piece of America all rolled up in my suitcase. I stopped reading *Superman* about five months ago, but found that I couldn't stay away from a good thing for long. I'm back...for good.

All I can say is thank you for all the enjoyment your comics have given me in my 20 years of growing up.

Hints: This Kubert school graduate eventually repaid DC for those years of enjoyment by co-creating one of the major villains of the '90s.

a) Dan Jurgens
b) Andy Kubert
c) Jerry Ordway
d) Graham Nolan

As you can see, the comic book letters page is more than just lots and lots of type. It's the first and best place you should turn to, in order to express what you'd like to see in your favorite or least favorite comic. Who knows, maybe someday when you're a pro, fans will be digging out your old letters from the fabled letters page. Hey, it could happen! ☆

William A. Christensen and Mark Seifert are two Illinois-based freelance writers who apparently have way too much free time on their hands. I mean, c'mon, how many books did they have to dig through to find all this crap?

"Cry havoc, and let loose the dogs of war!"*

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*BILL SHAKESPEARE

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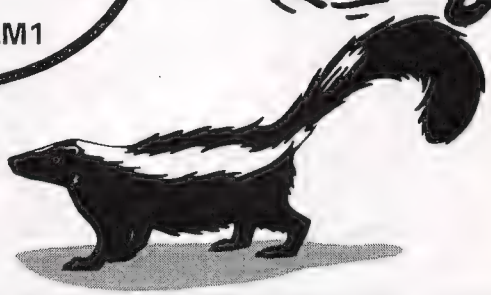

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SPEAK UP

What the comic fans of America were buying throughout 1994, and why. Compiled by Rogers Cadenhead, Henry T. Colonna III, David Prager, Marc Shapiro, and Craig Shutt.

WEST COAST: CALIFORNIA

Adrian Villarreal (22):
I like [Image's] *Spawn* and *The Maxx*—I like *Spawn* because of the art, the detail, and how the color and other elements are coordinated just right. With *The Maxx*, it's the story and the detail.

Jason James (21):
I like [DC's] *Starman* because it has a nice dichotomy. It mixes a number of genres. It has its cerebral moments, it has action, and it has a kind of *film noir* look and feel to it. Basically, it has everything in one book, and that's why I look forward to it.

Richard Chou (17):
I'm into [Image's] *WildC.A.T.s* because of the art, but I also like the idea that the stories don't jump from book to book and that the storylines don't go on forever. *WildC.A.T.s* works for me in that sense.

Teddy Loo (20):
Vertigo's *Sandman*, because of the story. I'm also looking at some of the Image titles, like *Spawn* and *Gen*^{13}. I like the art in those books. To me, Image has always been more of an art thing.

Dewayne Chan (19):
Youngblood [from Image]. It's a killer. Great plot. Great graphics.

Bob Cantu (31):
The two Batman/Punisher crossovers [from DC and Marvel Comics]. They were two characters I always thought should cross over [into one another's "universe"]. It was kind of cool that they were from two different companies, and that they could work something out, so it could happen.

Kent Verrs (31):
Sandman. It's the best-written, and it has the best art. The [current] story isn't my favorite, but I'm sure it will come together like they always seem to.

MIDWEST: ILLINOIS

Phil Cederstrom (35):
[Viz's] *Battle Angel Alita*. Massive carnage and bloodshed, manga art, and rollerblading cyborg women. Need I say more?

Kris Walker (9):
Barbie [by Marvel]. I like it because it shows Barbie having adventures of her own. I also like the animals they use, especially the horses and dolphins.

Vern Pena (20):
[Eternity's] *Robotech II: The Sentinels*. I read everything about Robotech. I like the style of the story and art.

Mario Bandera (28):
[Marvel's] *The Incredible Hulk*. I like the direction in which it has gone, giving the Hulk brains and an attitude, although my favorite period was when he was gray and working in Las Vegas.

Marcell Strbich (12):
[Marvel's] *Generation X*. I think it's a good idea to have a new generation of X-Men start their careers. [The first issue] had a cool cover, too.

George Skuros (37):
The Batman books. The "KnightsEnd" storyline was really interesting. I also enjoyed the way they passed the torch to [Nightwing] quietly.

Janet Ayers (25):
[DC's] *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. I like the show, and the comic captures it. The stories are good, but the art could be better.

Michael Ortiz (20):
[Marvel's] *X-Men* and *Uncanny X-Men*. They have so many plotlines in these books, that it keeps you coming back to see how they'll turn out. It's like a soap opera. If *Avengers* did that, it would be a better book.

Scott Cruz (8):
Amazing Spider-Man [published by Marvel]. I like it when he shoots out his webbing to catch crooks.

Aaron Brigman (19):
The "Suicide Run" story running in [Marvel's] Punisher titles. I like all the Punisher books, and this one kept me on the edge of my chair. I was glad they didn't kill him off, because I think that's a cheap way for a publisher to get attention.

Roxane Zeman (37):
[Chaos! Comics's] *Lady Death*. Lots of these kinds of comics have good art, but no story with them. This one had both.

Joe Gilroy (12):
Generation X. I liked seeing a lot of new X-Men characters. Jubilee is a good addition because she didn't fit into the other books.

I like DC's *Starman* because it has a nice dichotomy. It has its cerebral moments, it has action, and it has a kind of *film noir* look and feel to it.—JASON JAMES (21)

SOUTHEAST: VIRGINIA

Jimmy Strait (19):
[DC's] *Valor*. Great story, excellent art, very heroic buildup, got me involved with the Legion of Super-Heroes again.

Brenda Edmondson (54):
Groo [from Epic/Marvel]. Dependably funny every single issue.

Wayne Keimig (20):
[DC's] *Zero Hour*. Incredible time-travel story that changed DC and gave everyone a starting point into many good DC comics.

James Spellman (23):
Uncanny X-Men #310. The [Cyclops] and Cable reconciliation was extremely well-done.

Susan Bieber (33):
Sin City: A Dame to Kill For [published by Dark Horse]. Frank Miller's art style was original, and he handles adult storylines like no other.

Joseph Bieber (16):
The Punisher books. A great storyline all year long.

John McLaurin (28):
Gold Digger [published by Antarctic Press]. An excellent family comic, which is a rarity these days.

Charles Brannon (25):
The Golden Age [from DC]. Perfect story and perfect art. What else is there to say?

J. I. Gonding (22):
[Marvel's] *Doom 2099*. Great art and great story every single issue. I couldn't wait every month for the next one.

John Curtis (30-something):
X-O Manowar [from Valiant]. Jorge González is a fantastic writer.

Matt Ponicall (22):
New Warriors [published by Marvel]. This comic has both elements—great story and great characters that are always interacting in interesting ways.

Neil Albertson (28):
[DC's] Batman books. Batman rules all characters in all comics and all literature.

Sayetta (29):
[Marvel's] *Fantastic Four*. The Fantastic Four has been strong for years, and remains so.

David Heller (45):
[Disney/Gladstone's] *Uncle Scrooge*. This comic has never let me down; I've been reading it for a very long time.

Bill Smallenburg (21):
[Image's] *Deathblow*. The storyline has always been great, and the artwork has always been the best.

Stewart L. Davis Jr. (23):
[Marvel's] *The Incredible Hulk*. *Hulk*'s got it all—it's very funny, the stories are always compelling, and [series artist] Gary Frank has done a great job taking over from [former artist] Dale Keown.

NORTHEAST: NEW YORK

Matt Shumann (17):
[Marvel's] X-titles: They have great art and great stories.

Mark Hirshfield (29):
The X-titles. Wild art and well-written stories.

Mike Kane (11):
[Marvel's] *Wolverine*. I love Wolverine. Cool stories.

Darron Derosa (27):
The *Star Wars: Tales of the Jedi* miniseries. I really like the artwork and story. I'm a huge *Star Wars* fan, and what Dark Horse Comics has been doing with it is great.

***Sin City: A Dame to Kill For*, published by Dark Horse. Frank Miller's art style was original, and he handles adult storylines like no other.—SUSAN BIEBER (33)**

Jeff Smith's *Bone*. The main thing it did—besides being a wonderful comic—was open up the avenue for a bunch of small-press books. People like Teri Wood with *Wandering Star*, published by Pen and Ink, Michael Cohen with *Strange Attractors*, published by Retrografix, and Drew Hayes with *Poison Elves*, published by Mulehide Graphics.—RON KILLINGSWORTH (30)

Chris Bartoli (23):
Marvels [published by Marvel]. Great art and good stories!

Adrian Gonzalez (18):
[Topps's] *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs*. I loved the stories, and the artwork was good.

Mark Delgado (24):
[DC's] *Lobo*. Great stories, great artwork.

SOUTHWEST: TEXAS

Robert Bustos (18):
Malibu's *Firearm*. It has good, interesting stories. It's extremely impressive...the writer *would* have to be a British guy, wouldn't he?

Kyle Karuthers (26):
Three books run neck-and-neck: Marvels's *Daredevil: Man Without Fear*, *Marvels*, and [Scott McCloud's] *Understanding Comics*. I felt that *Understanding Comics* is something that this industry has needed for a long time. *Marvels* basically exemplified the superhero story. I'm biased towards *Man Without Fear* because I'm a longtime collector of *Daredevil*.

Ron Killingsworth (30):
Jeff Smith's *Bone*. The main thing it did—besides being a wonderful comic—was open up the avenue for a bunch of small-press books. People like Teri Wood with *Wandering Star* [published by Pen and Ink], Michael Cohen with *Strange Attractors* [published by Retrografix], and Drew Hayes with *Poison Elves* [published by Mulehide Graphics]. A lot of retailers [keep an eye out] for the next *Bone*.

Gary Higginbotham (23):
I'd have to say *Wolverine #75*. That's the one [which showed what happened after] Magneto [tore] the adamantium from Wolverine's bones—something I've been waiting to happen for a long time.

Adam Dumler (15):
I'd say I like the *Violator* mini-series [from Image], #1 especially. Alan Moore did a great job with the story; it was humorous, yet serious at the same time. The art was the best I've seen Bart Sears draw, and Greg Capullo's pictures of Spawn and the Violator have never looked better.

Ed Mayhall (21):
Dale Keown's *Pitt* [from Image]. [Pitt] is one bad mother, and the storyline is very interesting.

Bill Neville (41):
Batman Adventures: Mad Love. It was guys who are basically animators [Paul Dini and Bruce Timm], outsiders to the comics biz, doing a comic to show all of us how it's supposed to be done.

Joel Rea (35):
Best book: *Ashley Dust* [published by Knight Press]; best series: *Poison Elves* [published by Mulehide Graphics]. [For both,] the writing is sizzling and yet laughs at itself. The art is always taking challenges.

Jeff Bohning (23):
Bone. It's one of the few comics that's actually brought the humor back into the comic industry. I can laugh out loud with that one. There's intrigue, a little bit of romance—everything you need in a comic. ☆

Viz's *Battle Angel Alita*. Massive carnage and bloodshed, manga art, and rollerblading cyborg women. Need I say more?—PHIL CEDERSTROM (35)

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THE TOP 10 TOYS OF 1994

1994 has been an exciting year in the toy industry, with arguably more new toy lines and additions to existing toy lines than any previous year. So what were the ten best? Hard to say, but we're going to take a stab at naming them all.

10 Playmates introduced a line of heavily armed humans known as the Exo-Squad. While a lot of companies have tried to pull off men in armored suits and giant robot vehicles before—never with much success—this was an exception to the rule. Nicely crafted and detailed, these toys are a delight to look at, let alone play with.

9 Sometimes the villains of a line are the coolest, making being evil look cool. Carnage, from Toy Biz's Spider-Man line, does just that. While the company could have just given him a smooth body with a simple paint job, they decided instead to give him a highly detailed body—in addition to a cool paint job—making him appear almost alive.

8 Hasbro's *Nightmare Before Christmas* line, based on the movie of the same name, had an extremely limited production and release time. Despite already boasting a price that is now double or triple the original retail prices (depending on the figure), these eerie figures really capture the flair of this artsy film.

7 From Todd Toys's Spawn line comes the Medieval Spawn. Some nice sculpting, a good paint job, and lots of REALLY big spikes, make this a REALLY cool figure.

6 Kenner's *Aliens* toy line is a very cool line, but the company has outdone itself with the Aliens Queen Hive Playset: a dead-on likeness to the queen seen in the second film, with several points of articulation at the legs, tail, inner mouth, and head. Just another overall cool set.

5 Playmates proves time and time again that it is emerging as a dominant force in the toy community, with products that far exceed the quality of other toy companies' offerings. The Deep Space Nine Space Station with lights and sounds seems to be such an accurate replica of the one used in the show, that a movie studio could film this toy and you wouldn't be able to tell the difference.

4 Galoob's Micro Machines are always nicely done and packaged, but the entire *Star Wars* line is wonderful. From the packs containing three ships each, to the playsets with vehicles and mini-figures, to the new Toys R' Us exclusive 19-ship gift set, they're all great. Even the amount of detail given to these li'l guys is incredible.

3 At long last, Rogue, one of the most requested action figures from the Toy Biz X-Men series, arrived on the scene. Toy companies, such as Toy Biz, are finally realizing that five- to 12-year-old boys are not their only market. Companies are beginning to listen to the requests of collectors more and more. Hopefully this will be a trend that continues.

2 Playmates makes it onto the list a third time, with its Toys R' Us numbered *Star Trek* Command Set. While there was an unnumbered set released, there were only 10,000 of the numbered sets done. Consisting of four new figures (Kirk, Spock, Picard, and Riker, all in dress uniform) and two re-released figures (Sisko and Kira), this set proves that *Star Trek* toys continue to flourish in the coolness department.

1 And what is THE toy for the year? Well, it's an entire line, instead of a single figure. Hasbro's G.I. Joe 30th Anniversary series can't

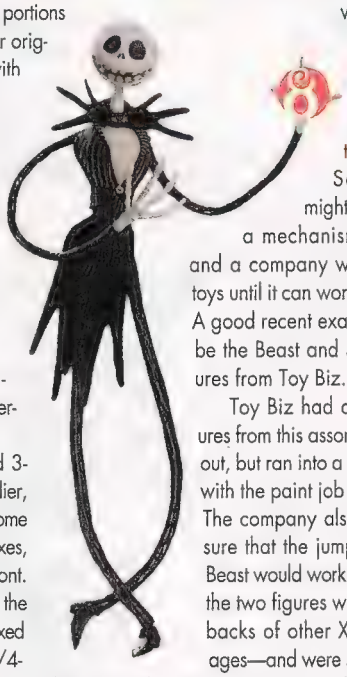
Exo-Squad ™ & © Playmates

Alien Queen ™ & © Twentieth Century Fox

Background Art ™ & © Eclipse.

be praised enough. The 12-inch portions of this line look exactly like their original 1964 versions. Coming with replicas of all their original accessories, these figures also include a reproduction of their original 1964 packaging. The variations on these figures, though, could drive a person insane. The Soldier, Marine, Pilot, and Sailor all have four different hair colors, making for a total of 16 12-inch figures. There's also a seventeenth 12-inch figure that's an African-American version of the Soldier.

Hasbro has also produced 3-and-3/4-inch versions of the Soldier, Sailor, Marine, and Pilot, which come in beautiful, gold foil-stamped boxes, with original 1964 art on the front. The ultimate neato collectible of the entire line, though, may be the boxed collectors set. All four 3-and-3/4-inch figures, and a bonus 3-and-3/4-inch Astronaut with Space Capsule (available only in this set), are included. Who says you can't teach an old dog new tricks?



"Why Can't I Find...?"

Several questions that seem to pop up a lot in the mail we receive here at "Toying Around" need to be addressed.

The number one question is: Why can't I find a toy other than the one I just bought, when it is pictured on the back of the package? Well, there are several factors that contribute to this. Sometimes there might be a problem with a mechanism or a paint job, and a company will not release the toys until it can work out the problems. A good recent example of this would be the Beast and Silver Samurai figures from Toy Biz.

Toy Biz had all of the other figures from this assortment ready to ship out, but ran into a couple of problems with the paint job on Silver Samurai. The company also wanted to make sure that the jumping action on the Beast would work properly. So, while the two figures were pictured on the backs of other X-Men figure packages—and were scheduled to ship at the same time—Toy Biz decided that it could either ship products you might not like, or hold onto them for a little while and make sure the figures shipped the way they were originally designed.

Another situation that may contribute to a figure not appearing as scheduled could be that the orders were not of a high enough volume to warrant producing it. Take a look at the pictures of Hudson, O'Mally, and Vasquez on some of the packaging for Kenner's *Aliens* figures.

After these three figures went into production, the orders did not warrant a standard national release. Kenner took the pieces that were produced, shipped them to their overseas dealers, and removed their pictures from all packaging.

The basic moral to this story is that you should not always believe every picture you see. Just about the only time you can be sure a figure has been released is when you can physically hold it in your hand.

Next month, we'll be back with our usual up-to-the-minute news of what the toy companies have up their sleeves. Until then, see you in aisle 7C.

Sean Aune is a freelance writer and owner of Splash Page Comics and Toys, a store in Kirksville, Mo.

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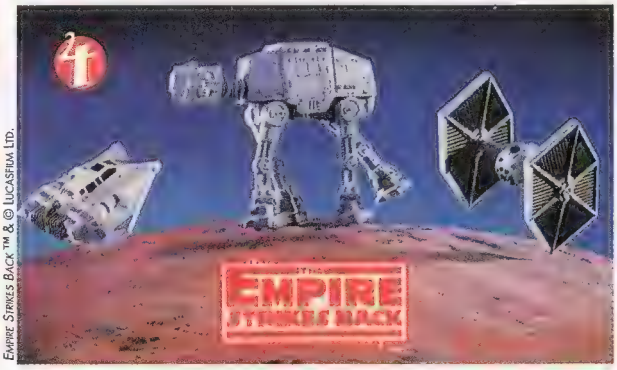

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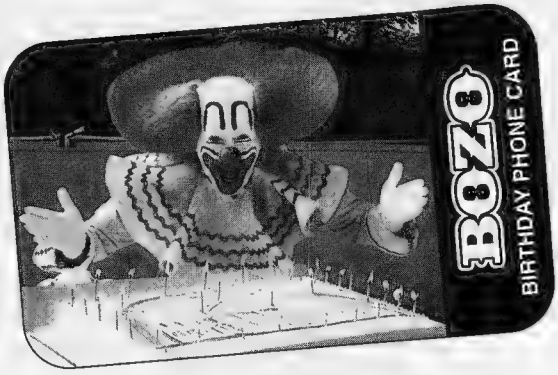

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DEALERS CALL FACTORY DIRECT

HOMEMADE HEROES

CLEARANCE SALE

After clearing out our files and gettin' ready for all the stuff we're gonna get in '95, we dug up some really awesome Homemade Heroes that, for some reason or other, never saw the light of day. So, in an effort to take up as many pages as possible, with us here at *Wizard* doing as little work as possible, we proudly present a whole mess o' neato li'l figure-guys. Enjoy.

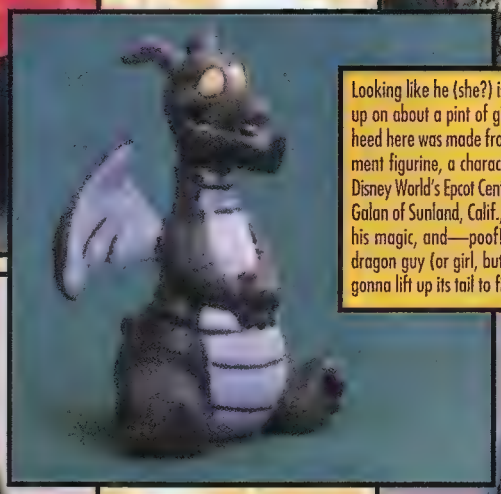
WHAT DID I WIN?

Unless otherwise noted, everyone who has a Homemade Hero see print here wins a Horizon Carnage model kit, a Gold *Ripclaw* #1/2, and a Gold *Lady Death* #1/2. Not to mention that warm, fuzzy feeling of having something printed in a magazine.

A showcase of homemade action figures.

Sergio Aragonés's Mighty Magnor was superbly created by Dean Reilly of Erdington, Birmingham, England. "I have no idea what figure Magnor used to be," he says. Regardless, it looks like it took him eons to sculpt the damn thing.

The chipper Rogue (as opposed to the popular dark-and-gritty version in the X-Men books) was made from a Barbie doll, and comes our way from the talented hands of Casey Landreth of Mesa, Ariz.



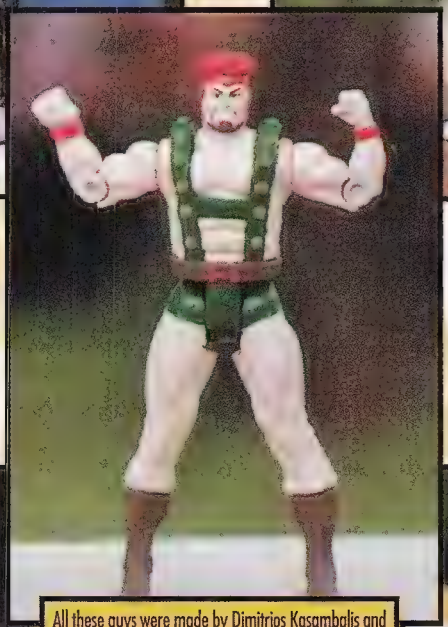
Looking like he (she?) is tanked up on about a pint of gin, Lockheed here was made from a Figment figurine, a character from Disney World's Epcot Center. Dave Galan of Sunland, Calif., worked his magic, and—poof!—a li'l dragon guy (or girl, but I'm not gonna lift up its tail to find out).

Joe Brown's 3-D Man (Geez, where was this guy dug up from?) was made from a Toy Biz Silver Surfer figure "with holes made from a paper punch used on the belt," says the Stoughton, Mass., resident.

The original Vigilante (who still holds up as a really cool-lookin' character) comes our way from Joey Gagliardi of Bell Canyon, Calif. It was made from a Toy Biz Punisher body, a Spider-Man head, and "some G.I. Joe parts."

Mighty Magnor ™ & © Sergio Aragonés. 3-D Man, Lockheed & Rogue ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group. Vigilante ™ & © DC Comics. Background Art ™ & © Eclipse.

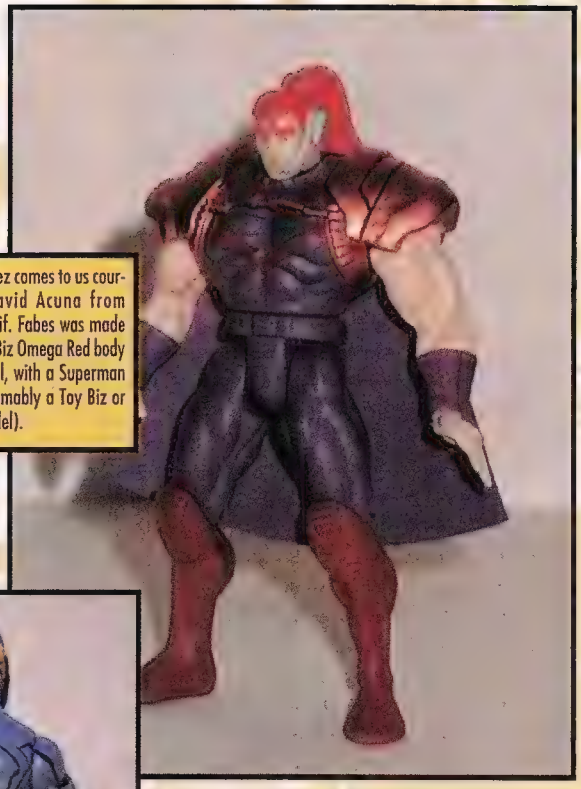
If you look hard enough, you'll see that Black Cat (right) was made from a Playmates Deanna Troi figure "with tons of white yarn," according to its creator, Chris Miller of Fullerton, Calif. Chris also created Super-Shredder, made from a Remco Warrior Beast's body with a Playmates Shredder head. He says, "Don't even ask about the armor; it's made from a million different things!" Wow! A million different things.



All these guys were made by Dimitrios Kasambalis and Kevork Jarjokian of the Bronx, N.Y. The Blob (left) was made from the Hasbro WWF Wrestler Typhoon (who, by the way, used to wear a cute li'l hat and call himself Tugboat, but that's neither here nor there), Hercules (above) from a Toy Biz Forearm (Somebody actually bought a Forearm figure? Wow!), and Space Ghost from a Kenner Animated Series Batman. Good job, guys!

Black Cat, The Blob and Hercules ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group.
Super-Shredder ™ & © Mirage Studios. Space Ghost ™ & © Hanna-Barbera.

Man-Thing was made from a Kenner Swamp Thing and a lot of work. And the best part is, Chris Spaseff of Tempe, Ariz., ate him when he was done.



Fabian Cortez comes to us courtesy of David Acuna from Lennox, Calif. Fabes was made from a Toy Biz Omega Red body and ponytail, with a Superman head (presumably a Toy Biz or Kenner model).

Blue Beetle was made by Brian Heiler, Whitby, Ontario, Canada. He was crafted from a Toy Biz Silver Surfer. The goggle thingies remain a mystery.

Talk about a blast from the past! Hanna-Barbera's Frankenstein Jr. was made from an unnamed five-inch Mighty Morphin' Power Ranger, courtesy of Paul Bartnik of Richmond, Va. The li'l guy on his shoulder appears to be Mattel's Mighty Max.

The Hunter Rose version of Matt Wagner's Grendel was made by Philip Aja of San Juan Capistrano, Calif., and was assembled from a Mattel Secret Wars Spider-Man.

Grendel ™ & © Matt Wagner. Frankenstein Jr. ™ & © Hanna-Barbera. Blue Beetle ™ & © DC Comics. Man-Thing & Fabian Cortez ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group.

SCHWARZAMANIA!
Randy Jennings of San Jose, Calif., likes to sculpt Arnold figures, "and he absolutely will not stop until you are dead!" Hmm, intense guy. Anyway, for his spiffy-cool Schwarzenegger figures, Randy strides off with a Horizon Terminator model kit, a Gold *Ripclaw* #1/2, and a Gold *Lady Death* #1/2.
Conan—Last Action Hero head, unnamed X-Men body, and "a lot of wax, paint, and carving."
Terminator—made from three different Kenner Terminator figures and wax.

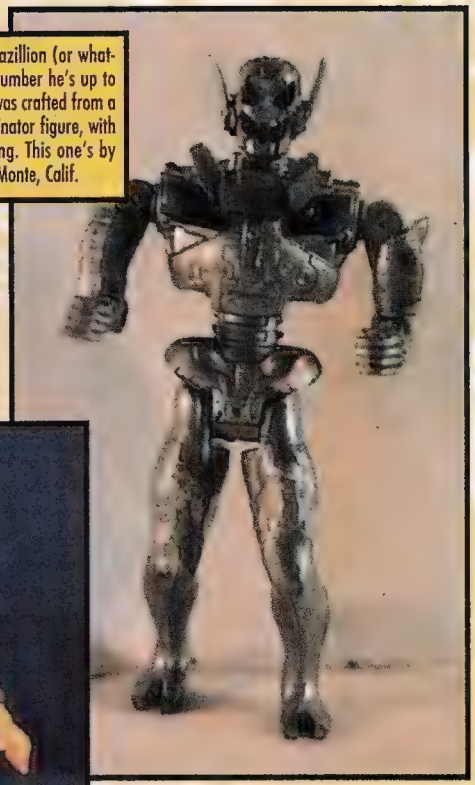
And not to be outdone, Randy's bud Jonathan Presby of Santa Clara, Calif., sent us this li'l Arnie guy. For his keen-o work, Jon wins a Horizon Terminator model kit, a Gold *Ripclaw* #1/2, and a Gold *Lady Death* #1/2.
Running Man—Last Action Hero figure with rub-on lettering and sculpting putty.

Dubuque, Iowa's Scott Kautman made Faust from a Toy Biz Wolverine III body and Wolvie II head. (Hey, shouldn't there be, like, blood and some naked people doin' stuff all around this character?)

This awesome Sludge figure, by Rick Bennison of Tampa, Fla., was made from a Kenner Swamp Thing body, Mattel's He-Man arms, and "a little slime." (Whatever.)

Faust ™ & © David Quinn, Tim Vigil, and Rebel Studios. Sludge ™ & © Malibu Comics Entertainment Inc.
Conan ™ & © Conan Properties Inc. Terminator ™ & © Carolco Pictures Inc.
Running Man ™ & © Tri-Star Pictures Inc.

Stingray, made by Joe Paraszczuk of Wantaugh, N.Y., used to be a Mattel Secret Wars Spider-Man figure. But slap on some red and white paint, plus some cloth for a cape, and you've got one cool (and underused as a character) figure.



This Ultron-bazillion (or whatever stupid number he's up to now) figure was crafted from a Kenner Terminator figure, with some sculpting. This one's by Chance of El Monte, Calif.

THIRD PRIZE winner

For his awesome rendition of the mighty (and quite dead) Baron Zemo (toughest guy to ever wear a skirt and have a mask glued to his head), Billy Hadder of Manassas Park, Va., used an unnamed Kenner Ghostbuster figure with an unnamed Hasbro G.I. Joe head. What'd he win? Horizon Carnage and Venom model kits; an Ultra-Limited Silver *Mantra* #1; an *X-O Manowar* #0 signed by Quesada; a *Supreme* #17, a *Newmen* #5, and a *Bloodstrike* #12, all signed by like half-a-dozen Extreme guys each; a Gold *Ripclaw* #1/2; and a Gold *Lady Death* #1/2.

GRAND PRIZE winner

This awesome Kyle Rayner Green Lantern, which is so real it's incredible, was made from a bunch of different stuff. His legs belonged to a Toy Biz Omega Red figure, the chest and arms are from a Tyco *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs* Jack Tenrec figure, and the head is from a Kenner *Shadow* figure. Hats off to Nathan Pyburn of Hoffman Estates, Ill., for a job well done. Congrats, big guy—you take the cake! Nate walks off with Horizon Carnage, Venom, and Spidey model kits; a Dark Horse Bone statue; *Marvels* #0, #3, and #4 signed by Alex Ross; a *Gen*[13] #1 signed by Brandon Choi; an *Incredible Hulk* #418 signed by Peter David; a Gold *Ripclaw* #1/2; and a Gold *Lady Death* #1/2.

SECOND PRIZE winner

This Mego-ish Nightcrawler (How awesome would Mego X-Men dolls be?) sees the light of day courtesy of the talented hands of Charlee E. Flatt of New Port Richey, Fla. His head (Nightcrawler's, not Chuck's) was hand-sculpted, and the costume was hand-sewn. The original body was taken from a Mego figure. For his spectacular entry, Charlee wins Horizon Carnage, Venom, and Spidey model kits; a *Batman: L.O.D.K.* #22 signed by Bart Sears; a Kindred #1 signed by Brett Booth; a Gold *WildStar* #1 signed by Jerry Ordway; an *Incredible Hulk* #420 signed by Peter David; a *Vengeance of Vampirella* #2 signed by Buzz; a Gold *Ripclaw* #1/2; and a Gold *Lady Death* #1/2.

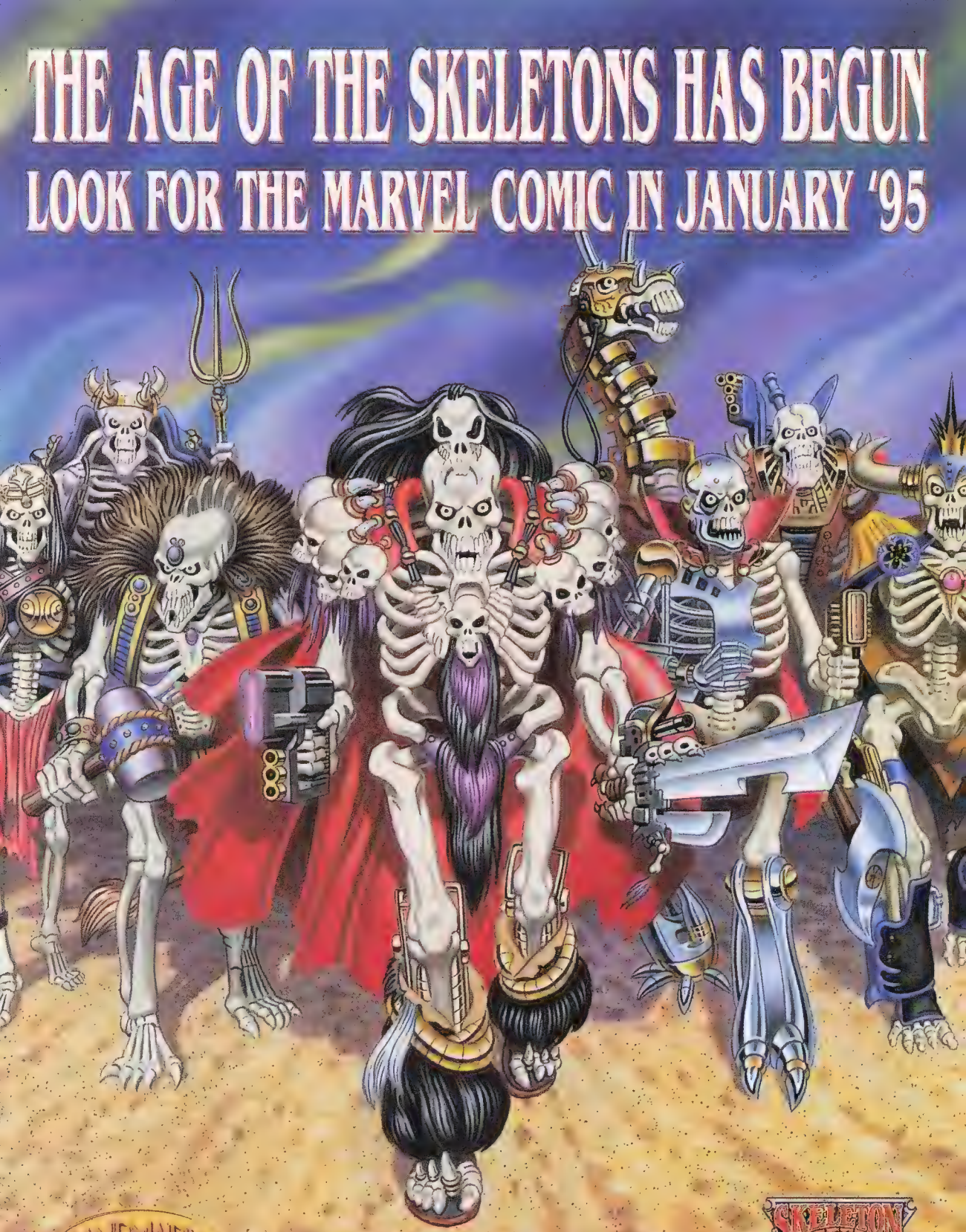
ONE LAST THING...

And that, as they say, is that. Thanks to all who entered, congratulations to everyone who won, and we'll see you back here next month for more of these cool li'l buggers. See ya. ☆

Ultron, Stingray, Nightcrawler, and Baron Zemo ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group.
Green Lantern ™ & © DC Comics.

THE AGE OF THE SKELETONS HAS BEGUN

LOOK FOR THE MARVEL COMIC IN JANUARY '95



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WIZARD CONTEST

Destroy the WildC.A.T.s!

WELL, AT LEAST YOU'LL TRY. Y'SEE, JIM LEE AND THE FUN BUNCH OVER AT WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS WANT YOU TO CREATE THE ULTIMATE WILDC.A.T.S VILLAIN, TO APPEAR IN THE *WILDC.A.T.S* ANIMATED TV SERIES!

WILDC.A.T.S AND WILDC.A.T.S LOGOTYPE ™ & © AEGIS ENTERTAINMENT, INC.

Grand Prize (One winner)

One talented fan, will have his or her villain cause our heroes all sorts of grief in an upcoming episode of the second season of the *WildC.A.T.s* animated series!

Second Prize (24 winners)

24 winners will receive a sheet of uncut WildC.A.T.s trading cards, signed by Jim lee!

Third Prize (25 winners)

25 other winners will receive a copy of *WildC.A.T.s Adventures* signed by Jeff Mariotte!

IN THIS CONTEST, WE'RE LOOKING FOR ORIGINALITY AS MUCH AS ARTISTIC TALENT, SO DON'T GIVE US SOME LAME, RUN-OF-THE-MILL SUPERVILLAIN. BE CREATIVE! ALONG WITH YOUR CHARACTER DESIGN, GIVE US A SHORT WRITE-UP BIO (25-50 WORDS) DETAILING HIS/HER ORIGIN AND POWERS, AND BOOM, YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY.

Submissions rules time!

SUBMISSIONS CAN BE ON ANY FORM OF UNLINED PAPER OR POSTERBOARD, CAN BE IN BLACK-AND-WHITE OR COLOR, AND CAN BE IN ANY MEDIUM (OILS, CRAYON, LINE ART, BLOODY STUMP, ETC.). NEON INKS WILL NOT PRINT. ARTWORK MUST NOT BE LARGER THAN 8" X 11-1/4". DO NOT FOLD, BEND, OR ROLL ARTWORK. MAIL FLAT TO AVOID DAMAGE. ALL ENTRIES ARE NONRETURNABLE AND BECOME PROPERTY OF WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS. EMPLOYEES OF WIZARD PRESS AND WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS WILL BE THE SOLE JUDGES OF THE CONTEST, AND ALL DECISIONS ARE FINAL.

Legal Crap

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press and WildStorm Productions, their immediate families, and that Erik Larsen fella. Geez, can that guy crank out supervillains or what? Print your name, address, city, state, zip code, telephone number with area code, and date of birth on the official entry form or a three-by-five-inch index card, and attach it to the back of your artwork, along with your brief character bio. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry to WildC.A.T.s Villain Contest, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064. No mechanical reproductions will be accepted. All entries become the property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state, and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes are offered. The prizes will be awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Only one prize per household. *In the case that the* WildC.A.T.s *animated series is not renewed for a second season, the winning entry will appear as a villain in the* WildC.A.T.s *comic book published by Image Comics.* Offer void where prohibited, regulated, or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purpose and rules hereof. Hmm, wouldn't it be odd if your villain was the one that beat Gareb up in the episode where Gareb does the voice of the guard? That'd be mighty ironic. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by February 24, 1995.** Wizard Press and WildStorm Productions are not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. The prize winners will be selected and judged, from all properly completed entries received at contest headquarters, by employees of Wizard Press and WildStorm Productions. The judging will be conducted on February 27, 1995, by Wizard Press. All decisions are final.

For the names of the winners, available after March 17,1995, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to WildC.A.T.s Villain Winners, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064, or just keep watching *Wizard!*

SO WHEN YOU'RE DONE DRAWIN' AND WRITIN', WHAT DO YOU DO? GLAD YOU ASKED. ATTACH YOUR CHARACTER'S BIO TO THE BACK OF YOUR CHARACTER DESIGN, ALONG WITH YOUR NAME, FULL ADDRESS, DATE OF BIRTH, AND PHONE NUMBER WRITTEN ON THE ENTRY FORM, AND MAIL THAT BAD BOY OFF TO:

WildC.A.T.s Villain Contest
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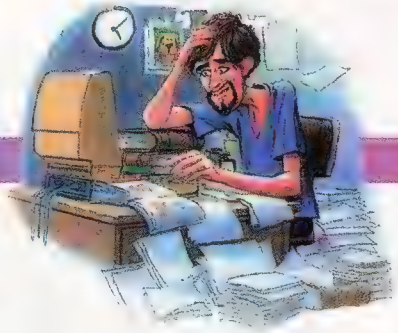
DATE OF BIRTH

SIGNATURE

I agree that my submission is the property of WildStorm Productions Inc.
BE SURE TO FILL OUT AND ATTACH THIS FORM, PLUS YOUR CHARACTER BIO, TO THE BACK OF YOUR ARTWORK!

QUICK! WHILE JIM'S ASLEEP, WE'LL OFF THE WILDC.A.T.S! WON'T HE BE SURPRISED!

PALMER'S PICKS



The Picks of '94

In the world of alternative comics, 1994 was a particularly odd year. An inordinate number of self-publishers popped up virtually out of nowhere, and previously obscure artists were thrust into the spotlight of mainstream culture. In short, comics that usually thrive on being obscure and keeping a safe distance from the mainstream, began popping up all over the place.

Established creators like Steve Bissette and Rick Veitch, as well as relative newcomers such as Terry Moore, made a splash by diving into self-publishing. Artwork from Dan Clowes—the twisted mind behind *Eightball*—and *Big Baby* creator Charles Burns appeared on cans of OK Cola™, a new soft drink from Coca-Cola™ that panders to the feelings of isolation and despair of "Generation X." Burns, and other alternative stalwarts like Peter Kuper, Richard Sala, and Adrian Tomine (to name a few), had their illustrations and cartoons published in such mainstream magazines as *Time*, *Rolling Stone*, *Playboy*, and *Pulse*. Even *Nickelodeon Magazine*, the magazine for the children's cable network, had a regular comics section with work from Sala, Jason Stephens, and underground pioneer Kim Deitch.

What does all of this exposure mean? Not much. Despite all of this attention, sales for small press/alternative/obscure comics are still pretty dismal. Most comic shop retailers are still afraid to take a chance on a comic that isn't in color or doesn't feature superheroes. Also, it seems like most readers won't seek out comics that offer a challenging reading experience. Thankfully, however, although we're a long way from a comic book utopia, the world out there appears to be a little more open to the idea of comics as a legitimate art form and means of expression.

1994 had a lot to offer for anyone interested in titles that veer away from the mainstream.

For about three years now, I've tried to do my part by covering what I feel to be the best of what the alternative scene has to offer. I've tried to sample everything from the grass roots mini-comics and self-publishing movement, to creator-driven comics that have the advantage of a larger company behind them. Unfortunately, in the small space I'm provided every month, I cannot cover everything out there. To make up for this, I've gathered together a group of comics that I haven't had enough room to cover in the past year's worth of Palmer's Picks (if you want to read more about any of these books, drop me a line and I'll see what I can do). So, now I'll stop rambling and present a sampling of the best alternative comics of the past year (in no particular order):

Underwater—After staying with his previous comic, *Yummy Fur*, for ten years, Chester Brown decided to drop everything and start over with a new comic, *Underwater*. The first issue of *Underwater* appeared at the end of the summer, and Brown seemed to be back in full form. With this new story, the surreal tone of Brown's *Ed the Happy Clown* series seems to be mixed with his quiet, meticulous autobiographical work. At this point, it is unclear where the story is going (all of the dialogue in the first issue was written in the gibberish that newborn children hear), but it is clear that Brown has created one of the most fascinating comics to come out in the past year.

Acme Novelty Library—If you think that alternative comics are only shoddily produced black-and-white rags, then you obviously haven't seen Chris Ware's *Acme Novelty Library*. In the first three issues of this series, Ware has gone from a luscious full-color comic, to an oversized tabloid black-and-white, to a pocket-size comic—each featuring a different character. The two aspects that all of these disparate comics have in common are Ware's precise artwork and dry, black sense of humor.

True Swamp—Probably one of the most difficult comics to find this past year was Jon Lewis's *True*

Some of the best alternative comics of '94.

Acme Novelty Library ™ & © Fantagraphics Books. *Pressed Tongue* ™ & © Dave Cooper.
Rare Bit Fiends ™ & © Rick Veitch. *True Swamp* ™ & © Jon Lewis. *Underwater* ™ & © Chester Brown.

Swamp. Even though Lewis received a grant from the Xeric Foundation and heaps of praise from the likes of Scott McCloud and Jim Woodring, his delicate story of the trials of Lenny the Leaf Frog is still struggling to gain a firm hold in the market.

***Jar of Fools*—**One of the most impressive debuts of the past year has got to be Jason Lutes's *Jar of Fools*. Another Xeric grant winner, Lutes has created a depressingly beautiful story. His efficient artwork and simple storytelling are marvelous. Where other artists use twenty lines to tell a story, Lutes does the job with one. The only bad thing about this comic is that the second part hasn't been published yet!

***Hepcats*—**After extensive touring and promotion last year, creator Martin Wagner proved that fans were willing to wait for his comic, *Hepcats*. The black cover to *Hepcats* #11 only hinted at the disturbing suburban horror inside. To tell you any more would ruin the story, so get out there and hunt down anything with Martin Wagner's name on it.

***Pressed Tongue*—**If you can imagine a combination of Basil Wolverton, Robert Crumb, and Chester Brown, then you'll have a pretty good idea of what to expect from Dave Cooper. His cartoonish characters and artwork bristle with an indescribable energy that pulls you in. *Pressed Tongue* is full of disgusting stuff like perverted landlords, pus, and dirty diapers, but Cooper somehow makes the whole thing fascinating and hard to put down.

***Rare Bit Fiends*—**Personally, I was a little disappointed at first to hear that Rick Veitch put his "King Hell Heroica" multi-book epic on hold in order to tackle *Rare Bit Fiends*. But once I saw the first issue, I changed my mind. Veitch has taken comics to a new level by transcribing his dreams in the form of a comic book. With *Rare Bit Fiends*, you can follow the subtle threads that Veitch's mind creates between each dream, or you can just be puzzled by each dream individually.

As you can probably tell by the above comics, 1994 had a lot to offer for anyone interested in titles that veer away from the mainstream. Hopefully, the new year will be full of more worthwhile alternative comics, and I'll be here at Palmer's Picks to humbly offer you a sampling of the best of them. ☆

Above: Kathryn of *Hepcats*. Top right: Jimmy Corrigan, the smartest kid in the world.

Tom Palmer Jr. is a freelance writer who just taught himself how to juggle. Once he gets good enough, he plans to abandon all of his material possessions and join the circus.

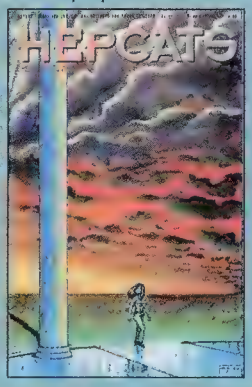
Tom's Recommended Reading

***Underwater*:** Two issues of Chester Brown's new comic should be available now for $2.95 each, and four-issue subscriptions are $8.95. Two collections of Brown's *Yummy Fur* comics, *The Playboy*, and *I Never Liked You* are also available. Write to Drawn & Quarterly Publications, 5550 Jeanne Mance St. #16, Montreal, Quebec, H2V 4K6, Canada.

***Acme Novelty Library*:** Chris Ware's format-changing comic series is available from Fantagraphics Books. The first three issues feature Jimmy Corrigan in a full-color comic, *Quimby the Mouse* in a black-and-white tabloid format, and Ware's infamous "potato guy" in a pocket-size book. The first issue is $3.50, and issues #2 and #3 are $3.95 each. Write to Fantagraphics at 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115.

***True Swamp*:** Four issues of Jon Lewis's self-published book are available. If you can't find this comic locally, write directly to Jon at Peristaltic Press, PO Box 95973, Seattle, WA 98145 for ordering information.

***Jar of Fools*:** Jason Lutes has published the first 70-page part of his two-part graphic novel in a spiffy black-and-white book that nobody should be without. Write to him at Penny Dreadful Press, 104 14th Avenue East, Suite F, Seattle, WA 98112.



***Hepcats*:** Martin Wagner self-publishes *Hepcats* through Double Diamond Press. You can order copies of *The Collegiate Hepcats* and *Snowblind*, two paperback collections, for $14.95 and $17, respectively. Six-issue subscriptions are available for $13.50. Write to Double Diamond Press, PO Box 27157, Austin, TX 78755-2157.

***Pressed Tongue*:** Dave Cooper's three-issue series is available from Fantagraphics (see above for the address). Each black-and-white issue is definitely not for kids, and is available for $2.95.

***Rare Bit Fiends*:** If you can't find copies locally, write to King Hell Press at PO Box 1371, West Townshend, VT 05359-1371. Five black-and-white issues are available for $2.95 each. Copies of *Bratpack* and *The Maximortal*, installments in Veitch's "King Hell Heroica," are available from Kitchen Sink Press. Write to the company at 320 Riverside Drive, Northampton, MA 01060 for ordering information.

Kathryn & *Hepcats* ™ & © Martin Wagner. Jimmy Corrigan ™ & © Fantagraphics Books.

COMIC BOOK INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT

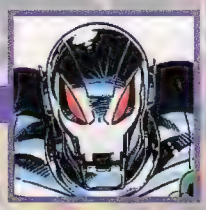
CBIQ

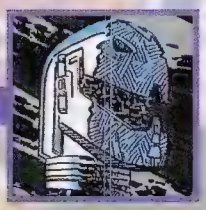
It's time once again to test all that worthless comic book knowledge you've accumulated in that noggin of yours when you should've been out playin' ring and run. What follows are 25 of the hardest questions ever slapped together by a band of wussy fanboys.

This month, we're grading your comic knowledge against the crappiest comic-related movies ever made. The higher your score, the more pathetic the movie, and the bigger the fanboy or fangirl you are!

score	rank
0-5	*Batman Returns*—Batman took off his mask in front of witnesses! World's Greatest Detective? World's Greatest Dumb-Ass is more like it.
6-12	*Swamp Thing*—If you look real closely, you can almost make out the zipper on the muck-encrusted mockery's costume!
13-19	*The Punisher*—He didn't even have the freakin' skull on his costume! And why did they show us his butt?
20-24	*Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2*—Ice, Ice, baby!
25	*Captain America*—Two words: rubber ears!

1) Who created Ultron-7?

A 

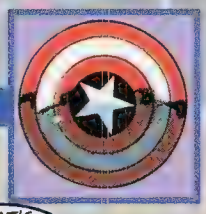
B 

C

D

2) Which of the following four shields was Captain America's original shield?

A

B 

C

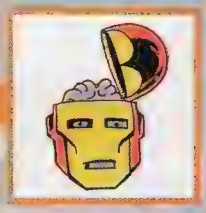
D

3) Which of the following Iron Man helmets never existed?

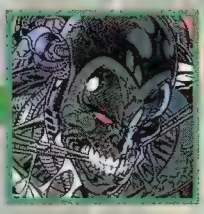
A

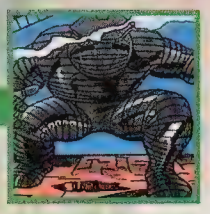
B

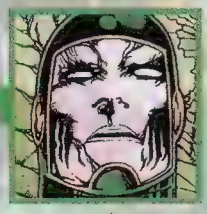
C

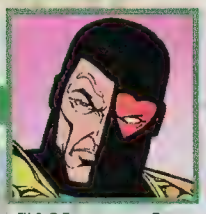
D 

4) Which of these was a herald of Galactus?

A 

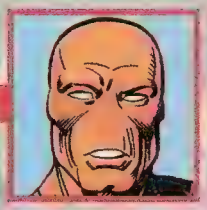
B 

C 

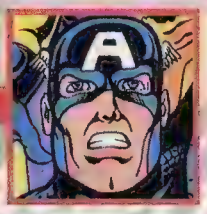
D 

All characters and images shown ™ & © Their respective Owners

5) Which of the following characters hasn't picked up the hammer of Thor?

A 

B

C 

D

6) Which of the following characters is not the direct result of exposure to gamma radiation?

A

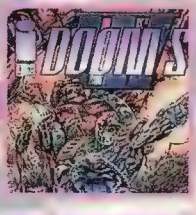
B

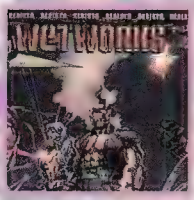
C

D

7) Which of the following Image books shipped the latest?

A

B 

C 

D

8) Which of the following books sucked the most?

A

B

C

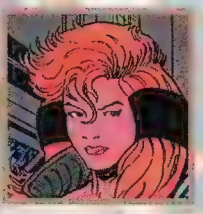
D

9) Which of the following characters has never been a member of the Fantastic Four?

A

B

C

D 

10) Which of the following characters has Dazzler not defeated?

A

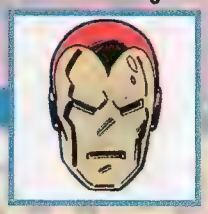
B

C

D

11) Who has never been a chairperson of the Avengers?

A

B 

C

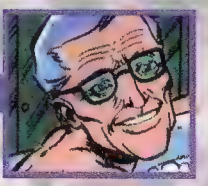
D

12) Which Spidey supporting cast member hasn't been offed?

A

B

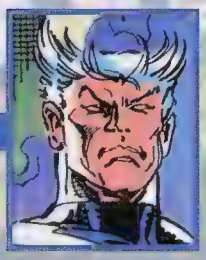
C

D 

13) Which of the following characters was not a member of the original Brotherhood of Evil Mutants?

A

B

C 

D

14) Which of the following comic creator match-ups would be the most entertaining, if we gave 'em each a spandex jumpsuit and one of them big Q-Tip™ staff thingies from *American Gladiators*, and made 'em fight it out?

A

B

C

D

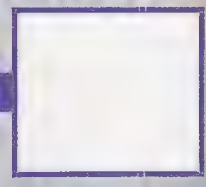
PHOTOS: AL ORTEGA

15) Which of these was Sue Richards's first costume?

A

B

C

D 

16) Which of the following big, scary monster types doesn't wear li'l underpants?

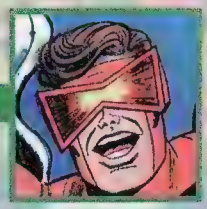
A

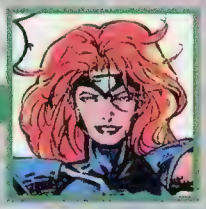
B

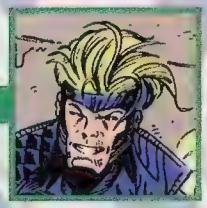
C

D

17) Which character is not related to Scott Summers?

A 

B 

C 

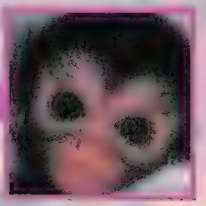
D

18) Which of the following animals has never been a Kryptonian Super-Pet?

A

B

C

D 

19) Who has never been a Green Lantern?

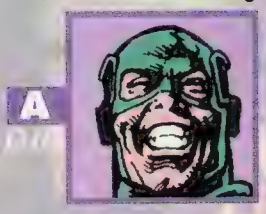
A

B

C

D

20) Which of the following characters did the Flash (II) murder?


A

B

C

D

21) Which of these Wonder Woman supporting cast members is still alive?

A

B

C

D

22) Who killed Al Simmons?

A

B

C

D

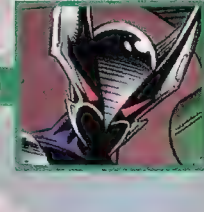
PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

23) Who was not a member of Team 7?

A

B

C


D

24) Which of the following characters does not derive his powers from necromantic energies?

A

B

C

D

25) Which of the following facial expressions would follow Wolverine catching himself in his zipper?

A

B

C

D

A	N	S	W	E	R	S
1) C	2) C	3) D	4) B	5) D	6) A	7) C
10) C	11) A	12) C	13) A	14) B	15) B	16) D
19) A	20) B	21) A	22) C	23) D	24) B	25) D

WIZARD CONTEST

Star Wars

TRY TA CHEAT JABBA, WILL YA? WELL, YOU SAW WHAT HAPPENED TO THAT SOLO GEEK AFTER HE DUMPED THE HUTT'S CARGO AND RAN. WHAT BOBA FETT WANTS, BOBA FETT GETS. BUT JUST HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE GALAXY'S MOST LETHAL BOUNTY HUNTER? TAKE A STAB, AND EITHER WIN BIG OR HAVE MR. FETT PUT A NEAT LITTLE HOLE RIGHT IN YOUR FOREHEAD!

Grand Prize (One winner): A limited-edition *Star Wars: Dark Empire* hardcover, and a copy of the limited-edition gold *Dark Empire* #1, all signed by Tom Veitch and Cam Kennedy!

Second Prize (Two winners): A copy of *Dark Empire II* #1 signed by Veitch and that Kennedy guy!

THE ONLY WAY TO GET YOUR GRUBBY PAWS ON THAT BOOTY IS TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING FOUR BOBA FETT QUESTIONS. CAN'T DO IT? WELL THEN, YOU'LL RUN THE RISK OF OFFENDING MR. FETT, WHICH CAN BE MIGHTY UNHEALTHY...

1. BOBA FETT WEARS THE ARMOR OF WHAT GROUP OF WARRIORS?

2. WHAT MANNER OF SCALPS ADORN BOBA FETT'S ARMOR?

3. WHAT IS THE NAME OF BOBA FETT'S SHIP IN *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*?

4. WHAT CREATURE SWALLOWED BOBA FETT IN *RETURN OF THE JEDI*?

ONCE YOU'VE KNOCKED OFF THEM THERE QUESTIONS, FILL OUT THE OFFICIAL BOUNTY HUNTER COUPON DOWN THERE, PACK IT IN CARBONITE, AND SHIP THAT SUCKER OFF TO:

*WOW, JUST LIKE IN THE MOVIES, BOBA FETT'S SO COOL, HE DOESN'T SAY ANYTHING. *HE'S SO MYSTERIOUS!!*

Boba Fett Contest
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920-2064

BETTER GET MOVIN'— THIS CONTEST ENDS FEBRUARY 24, 1995, AND IF YER LATE, YER DEAD.

Da Fine Print

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Dark Horse Comics, their immediate families, Salacious Crumb, and that Leia babe. Geez, when she pulled out that thermal detonator in *Jedi*, Boba nearly soiled his armor. Print your name, address, city, state, zip code, telephone number with area code, DOB, and the answers to the Boba Fett trivia questions on the official entry form, a three-by-five-inch index card, or a standard postcard. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry to Boba Fett Contest, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064. No mechanical reproductions will be accepted. All entries become the property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state, and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes are offered. The prizes will be awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated, or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purpose and rules hereof. Y'know, Boba Fett's only line in *Return of the Jedi* was screaming like a little sissy-Mary when he was knocked into the Sar...ooops, almost gave away the answer to trivia question #4. Never mind. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by February 24, 1995.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. The prize winners will be selected in a random drawing from all properly completed entry forms received at contest headquarters. The random drawing will be conducted on February 27, 1995 by Wizard Press.

For a list of winners, available after March 17, 1995, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Boba Fett Winners, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064, or just keep watching *Wizard*!

BOBA FETT and *STAR WARS* ™ & © Lucasfilms Ltd.

COUPON
Official Bounty Hunter

I am:

NAME (PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY) DATE OF BIRTH

HOME ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

PHONE (DON'T FORGET YOUR AREA CODE)

ANSWER TO QUESTION #1

ANSWER TO QUESTION #2

ANSWER TO QUESTION #3

ANSWER TO QUESTION #4

the WIZARD OF CARDS

By Stephen Shamus

Attention, Skeleton-seekers: Fleer has acquired the trading card license to produce *Skeleton Warriors* trading cards. Done in the premium Ultra style, the cards are based on the Saturday morning animated series.

This 100-card collection features computer-enhanced art, a trait made famous by Fleer's Flair Marvel series. Shipping in January, eight-card

1995's First, 1994's Best

packs have a suggested retail of $1.49 per pack. Chase cards include the usual suspects found in Fleer non-sports sets, including a nine-card Power Blast etched-foil set found one in every six packs, sporting some of the good guys from the Legion of Light and some of the Skeleton Warriors. Suspended Animation chase cards come one in every four packs, and the 10 characters in the set include a mix of some brand-new characters and some of the original ones (hey, they're *all* cool). Lastly, a five-card Glow-in-the-Dark chase set features the Skeleton Warriors, with one in every four packs. Look for these babies on store shelves in mid-January.

By the way, for those of you who are (gasp) unfamiliar with the CBS show, it is a story of good versus evil, where the keeper of the Lightstar Crystal rules the kingdom of Luminaire. The crystal was almost stolen from Prince Lightstar, the current ruler, but was shattered. When it shattered, everyone around it who was evil at heart, became an immortal skeleton. One man, Grimskull, who is the prince's brother, became the only half-man, half-skeleton. The show—and card set—both sound pretty cool, so you might wanna check 'em out.

For the holiday gift-buying/giving/keeping-for-yourself season, SkyBox is releasing an Ultraverse II: Origins factory set. The set, based upon Malibu Comics's Ultraverse line of books, includes all 90 cards from the original Ultraverse II set, as well as the nine chase cards. In addition, two new cards will appear, featuring Contrary and Topaz, as painted by Cathleen Thole, and printed on foil stock. The set comes packed with a specially designed Ultraverse binder to house your full set of cards with card pages. Alex Ross's painting of Prime appears on the front of the binder, while Barry Windsor-Smith's Rune appears on the back. Only 5,000 sets are being produced, and the whole package should set you back between $50 and $55.

One ringy-dingy...Marvel has done it again—it's entered another segment of the media: this time, phone cards. In conjunction with Global Telecommunication Solutions, Inc. (one of the largest phone card-producing companies), the company's producing a four-card Halloween set featuring: Morbius by Mike Mignola; Nightmare/Dr. Strange by Mark Buckingham; Spider-Man vs. Hobgoblin and Green Goblin by Mike Allred; and Ghost Rider by Malcolm Jones III. Each card in this set will offer 10 units of phone time, plus a two-minute audio tale from each hero, which you'll hear when you use each card. You can buy a set—only 5,000 will be produced, so hurry—for $40, by calling LogoFon at 1-800-280-1166, or through specialty stores and Marvel comics. Can you think of a more fun way to make a call? Shoot-a-mile!

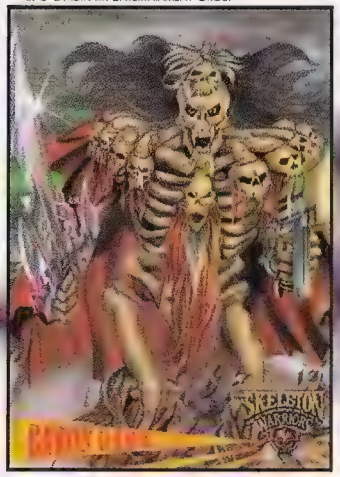
As many of you know, Topps's collation on both Universal Monsters and Mars Attacks sets was not so hot—collectors found too many duplicates in each box. If you're one of these frustrated collectors, the company has announced a redemption program to help ease your mind. In order to help you out, you may send a maximum of 25 regular cards per box—up to a one-case limit—to be exchanged for new regular cards. The redemption offer expires December 31, 1994, so hurry and send a list of the cards you would like, the duplicate cards, and your name and address to:

The Topps Company, Inc.
401 York Ave.
Duryea, PA 18642-2035
Attn: Consumer Affairs/Non-Sport Redemption

Dr. Who, the sci-fi show with almost as many fans as the almighty *Trek* (would they be called "Whosiers"?), will be featured in a second series from Cornerstone in mid- to late-December. The 110-card set features scenes from the TV show. Ten-card packs will sell for ten bits—$1.25—and chase cards haven't been determined yet, but there should be the same amount as the first series, seven in all.

From FPG comes a fully painted Joe Jusko set. The set, entitled Jusko's Edgar Rice Burroughs, spotlights Jusko's interpretations of Burroughs's Tarzan character. In early December, this 60-card set, which is printed on thick Fleer Flair-like stock, will show you once again what a true master Jusko is. The chase cards include six different Metallic cards found two to three per box, 1,000 signed Jusko cards—one of which can be discovered in every three cases—and one numbered lithograph is found in every case (with a maximum of 3,000 total). The only difficult part to swallow is that six-card packs will cost you two bucks each.

™ & © Landmark Entertainment Group



™ & © Landmark Entertainment Group

Hey, your epidermis is showi...uh, never mind. Fleer presents *Skeleton Warriors* trading cards.

™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group

Hotter'n POGs, it's Marvel phone cards!

Our Top 10 Non-Sports sets for 1994 represent a broad spectrum of topics and areas. These sets are the ones that had the most positive impact on the market in '94. This in no way demeans any sets not on the list—hundreds of sets were released this year, so only a select few could be chosen. (All you unrepresented companies out there better not unleash your foil-stamped pit bulls on us!) Without further ado, here they are, in order of increasing importance:

WildStorm *(WildStorm Productions)*. Jim Lee's 4,000-case run on WildStorm made that series a biiiiig hit. The autograph cards, found once in every other box, was a great chase that had collectors passionately searching. It was a pretty novel idea to do different colored boxes with different signed cards, too. Look for the oversized Series 2 soon. And look for a ton of fun, thrillin', drop-your-jaw-and-open-your-wallet products in 1995!

Star Wars Galaxy *(Topps)*. Lucasfilms opened up the archives to Topps on this one, which made for a very solid set. The *Star Wars* license still has legs (unlike Mark Hamill's career), even though it's been almost 20 years since the original movie hit theaters. We're talking beautiful cards here, Jedi collectors.

Star Trek: Generations *(SkyBox)*. This set adapts the seventh installment of the popular *Star Trek* movies. Fans have been starved for months since *Star Trek: The Next Generation* was taken off the air (but here comes *Generations*, which looks to be good eatin'!), and Trekkies have proven that they want everything and anything they can get their hands on. (Even a hair offa Patrick Stewart's head—talk about rare!)

The Simpsons Series 1 *(SkyBox)*. *The Simpsons* made a big comeback this year on TV (best line: "I can see through time!"), and now they've done pretty well in the comics and cards markets. *The Simpsons* set was without a doubt the most fun product on cardboard this year. The Wiggle Cards, the Magic Motion cards, and the Flip-O-Matic cartoon on the backs were great. The cases were an instant sell-out and can be found at currently over $40 a box. Oh, yeah, the set also sports the coolest chase card of all time: the Art de Bart. With this redemption card, you get an original sketch drawn by the main man himself, Matt Groening.

Sandman *(SkyBox)*. The Vertigo comic line has been a big mover for DC Comics this year, with none better than *Sandman*. SkyBox decided to take a chance on this one and make the cards a not-so-standard 2 1/2-by-4 1/2 inches. Not only did SkyBox sell out of this superhot set, but packs are now selling for over $3.00 a shot, while the suggested retail was in the mid-$2 range. High-quality is an understatement for these cards, leaving fans drooling in anticipation of next year's Vertigo card set.

Ultra X-Men *(Fleer)*. This was the first Marvel set released by Fleer, back in early '94. At first, people were skeptical about a $1.79-per-pack price tag attached to a non-sports product. The cards flew off the shelves as soon as they were released and caused a furor never before seen in the market.

Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers *(Collect-A-Card)*. Look what happened to a cheesy TV show about five teens who morph into Rangers and fight Godzilla-like creatures. Its popularity climb has been almost as unbelievable as that of *Baywatch*! Power Rangers have been all the rage for over a year now, and once again are the hottest holiday items anywhere in the U.S. (Just *try* to name a hotter holiday product, naysayer.) Is this a temporary fad or the next Ninja Turtles? I guess we'll find out next year, around this time.

Magic: The Gathering *(Wizards of the Coast)*. This game has taken off like a rocket, placing the relatively unknown Wizards of the Coast company on everyone's lips, talking about one of the hottest games going. (He told two friends, then they each told two friends...) Creator/designer Richard Garfield has become one of the most sought-after names in gaming, thanks to this intensely intricate and exciting game. Players are mesmerized by the game and are known to play for days at a time, without eating, breathing, or even standing up.

The Lion King *(SkyBox)*. Never before has a movie set ever accomplished what *The Lion King* has. Burger King ran out of *Lion King* toys so quickly by the Tuesday of each week of the promotion, that instead of giving out toys, the restaurant chain exposed hundreds of thousands of kids (and some adults who just love those kids' meals) to the trading card medium by giving them packs of *Lion King* cards. Let's just hope these kids don't grow up to be the money-is-everything hardcore collectors, and instead learn to find the fun in card collecting.

Flair History of the Marvel Universe *(Fleer)*. "$4 packs of cards won't sell," people said. Well, Fleer VP of Entertainment and Business Development Bill Jemas proved them wrong. This set was the sleekest Marvel Universe set ever created, featuring Spidey, the X-Men, and everyone else in the hoppin' Marvel Universe. The etched-foil chase cards were awesome and the digitally colored artwork enhanced the artwork beyond belief. Todd McFarlane's Venom never looked better. The high-quality stock and printing made these babies all look like original pieces of art.

Stephen Shamus is the co-publisher of Collector's Sportslook, *and he runs like a duck. It's really weird and kind of hard to imagine unless you've seen it, but it's true.*

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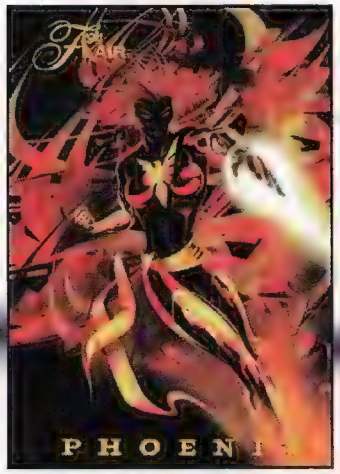

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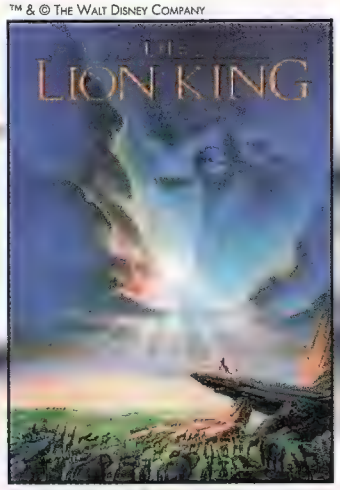

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Examples of the top three card sets of '94 (left to right): Fleer Flair '94, *The Lion King* card set, and *Magic: The Gathering*. Take a bow!

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Comic Fans Only

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Do you ever wish that you could lock out the whole world and just spend the night reading and talking about comic books? Well, so does Jeff Smith, creator of *Bone*. He's going to spend a night at Comic Relief, his favorite comic store, doing just that, and he'd like you to join him!

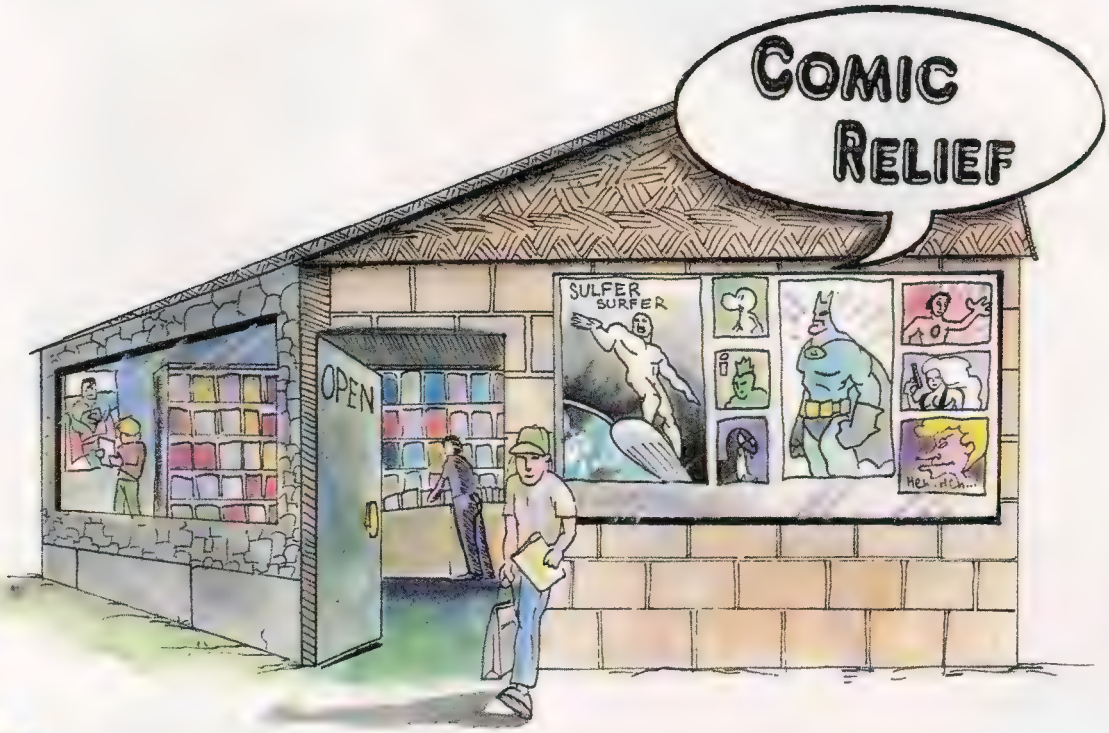

Illustration By David Prager

Grand Prize (Two winners)

Two winners, each with a friend (or legal guardian if under 18) will be flown to Berkeley, CA, where you'll hang with Jeff Smith in his favorite comic book store, Comic Relief. Yup, you heard right. You'll just hang out with Jeff Smith, snack on all kinds of crappy junk food, read the coolest comics all night long, and have a couple o' surprise guests stop by.

SO, HOW DO YOU ENTER THIS EXCELLENT CONTEST? PRETTY DARN SIMPLE, ACTUALLY. ALL YOU GOTTA DO IS FILL OUT THE OFFICIAL BONE COUPON BELOW, ATTACH A PHOTOCOPY OF A DOCUMENT PROVING THAT EITHER YOU OR THE PERSON WHO WILL ATTEND THE TRIP WITH YOU IS 18 OR OLDER, STUFF IT ALL IN AN ENVELOPE, SLAP A STAMP ON IT, AND MAIL THAT SUCKER OFF TO:

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151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920-2064

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No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Cartoon Books, their immediate families, and anybody who doesn't read their comics. C'mon, man, there're a lot of good comics out there. Pick up some new titles and give 'em a shot. Print your name, address, city, state, zip code, date of birth, and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a three-by-five-inch index card. Have your companion fill out the same information, and staple photocopies of a birth certificate, driver's license, or other document proving your age and the age of your companion to the form. If you are under 18, you must travel with a parent or legal guardian as your companion. Have your parent or legal guardian complete the "friend" portion on the official Bone coupon. Winners must accept travel arrangements originating from any point in the continental U.S., between March 1 and July 31, 1995, or forfeit the prize to an alternate winner. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry to Bone Contest, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064. No mechanical reproductions will be accepted. All entries become the property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state, and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes are offered. The prizes will be awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated, or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purpose and rules hereof. Boy, wouldn't it be tacky if Jeff Smith spent the whole night readin' back issues of *Bone*? Nah, he's too cool for that. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by February 24, 1995.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. The prize winners will be selected in a random drawing from all properly completed entry forms received at contest headquarters. The random drawing will be conducted on February 27, 1995 by Wizard Press.

For a list of winners, available after March 17, 1995, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Bone Winners, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064, or just keep watching *Wizard*!

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TOP 10 HEROES & VILLAINS OF THE MONTH

This list doesn't track the number of copies which a specific character sells each month. It doesn't pay any attention to any kind of sales meter. This list is a roster of the 10 comic book characters with the strongest fan following—nothing more, nothing less.

1. SPAWN

Hey, looks like somebody sat down li'l Spawny guy and made him read the entire run of his series all in one sitting. That would do it to ya, all right. Anyway, Spawn here continues to be the hottest character in comics, thanks to the artistic skills of one T. McFarlane, and with the amount of cool stuff (and rumored cool stuff) that the Toddmeister is slapping together (toys, movies, cartoons, all kinds of neat junk), Spawny-guy's popularity continues to grow by leaps and bounds. If you think his last two "You like me! You *really* like me!" years were something else, well, just you wait. Expect this down-on-his-luck horribly-disfigured spawn of the lower pits of Satan's realm to remain real big with the kids!

2. SPIDER-MAN

"My parents were shapeshifting robots bent on my destruction? My clone is alive and taking over half my books? Who's writing me?" Hey, relax, Petey, you're getting a cartoon and a new toy line. Things can't be *that* bad. Well, actually, your private life does kinda suck. That thing with your parents, that weird business with your clone, your marital problems, that rash—boy, I'd be down in the dumps, too. Well, if it's any consolation, things can't get any worse. So go shave, take a shower (please), catch some shut-eye, and learn to "Stop the insanity!" If you can't, go hit the talk show circuit. With your screwed-up life, you'd make a mint. (But watch out for Geraldo. He's cagey.)

3. WOLVERINE

Lookin' like somebody just squirted some Nair™ his way, the most bestest X-Man we know, Wolverine, re-enters the top ten chart this month. Why the sudden surge in popularity? Hell, we don't know. It could be that the monthly Wolvie series is pretty spiffy, with cool stories by Larry Hama and top-notch artwork by Adam Kubert. Or it might be that the fan tension is reaching a boiling point, as Wolvie approaches his big 100th issue, and rumors are flyin' about him rejoinin' the X-Men (he quit when that dillweed Magneto pulled all the adamantium outta him), as well as him gettin' them aforementioned adamantium bones back. Whatever it is, our boy Logan is back.

4. BATMAN

Is it me, or do all the heroes in this month's Top Ten Heroes & Villains look like they just spotted a butt-nekkid Tommy Lasorda pickin' up his wallet? No? Whatever. With more costume (and identity) changes this year than Hannibal Smith had in any season of *A-Team* (whoa... an *A-Team* reference), Bats has kept fans tightly gripping the rail of his emotional roller coaster. And now with Dick Grayson doin' the hero thang under the cape and cowl, things are the coolest they've been in months! So heck, don't let the fact that he doesn't have pupils scare ya—pick up any Batbook (especially *Robin*), and see what yer missin'!

Spider-Man & Wolverine ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group. Spawn is a registered trademark of Todd McFarlane Productions Inc.
Spawn © Todd McFarlane Productions Inc. Batman ™ & © DC Comics.

5. GAMBIT

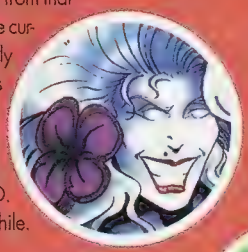
"Arrghhh! Mon ami, I canna believe I canna touch Rogue! C'est la guerre! Gott in Himmel! Zest fuli cleen!" Wow. Gambit here's so upset that his accent is even worse than usual. And hey, as far as not being able to touch Rogue, how do you think the six billion male X-fans feel every time they see a painted Rogue trading card, or a hot Roger Cruz Rogue in a skimpy outfit? They gotta soak a few body parts in ice water for days. (Which, if you add Paas™ Easter egg coloring powder, can be loads of fun on a rainy Saturday.) Well, ragin' Cajun hormones or not, Gambit, next to our pal Wolvie, is the hottest X-Man goin'.

6. PITT

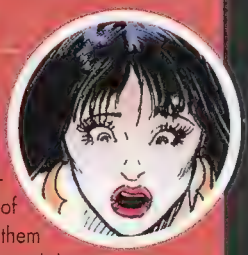
"Raaarghhh! Me no can touch Rogue either! Pitt smash!" Hey, first off, noseless boy, cut it with the "Pitt smash!" crap. There's only one Hulk. Second, while you can't get a hold o' Rogue, your monthly...uh, annual series is drawn by Dale Keown, who draws like the hottest babes around, and is sprinklin' your series with loads o' babearoonies, so relax. As a testament to Pitt's popularity, he's fairly high on this chart month after month, even though his only semi-monthly appearances occur in all the Image books but his own (where *are* you, Mr. Keown?). How long can he stick around with just a "guest star" comic book status? Long enough, it seems.

7. LADY DEATH

Quite the dilemma here. How do you tell the living embodiment of silico...I mean death, that something's fallen out of her nose and stuck to her bottom lip? I guess proper etiquette demands that you hold her close, look deep into her eyes, and when you go to plant one on her, nibble it off. That's what I'd do. Aside from that unpleasant business, Lady Death is enjoying the current bad girl trend, whereby any impossibly voluptuous comic female with an attitude has become the hottest thing going since, well, anything with an X on it. With another mini-series planned, as well as always popping up in whatever Evil Ernie is doing, expect L.D. here to stick around the hot charts quite a while.



8. VAMPIRELLA



Hey, keep that up and your eyes'll stay that way. Also riding high on the charts is Harris's Vampirella, the most excellent brunette, undead (possibly extraterrestrial), dental floss-wearing champion of good this side of Transylvania. With them Harris folks keeping the heat turned on with her monthly series, her upcoming crossover with Image's ShadowHawk, and her jumpin' rope while wearing that li'l costume o' hers, Vampi will be with us for some time. (And as a side note, if they ever make a live-action Vampi flick, our vote goes for Winona Ryder playin' the lead. She is awesome.)

9. SHI

Shi, lookin' like she went to the same tanning salon as Lady Death, rounds out our triumvirate of way-hot bad girls in this month's Top Ten. A female samurai, Shi is not only a dangerous babe, a hot-lookin' babe, and a popular babe, she's also a well-written babe. *And* a well-drawn babe. For those of you who haven't picked up an issue of *Shi* (which is almost understandable, since copies are harder to come by than a TV channel without O.J. coverage), you're missin' out on a pretty keen comic. The story centers on the struggles—mostly against her nemesis Arashi—and adventures of Ana Ishikawa, one formidable and highly skilled warrior, and simply should not be missed.

10. SUPERMAN

Wipe that smug look off yer kisser, Supes...if that's who you really are! For those of you who aren't followin' the Superman titles (including the overly-excellent *Superboy*), it was recently discovered that Superman's corpse is in Superman's tomb! Not a bad place to be if you're Superman's corpse, but considering how Superman has been flyin' around Metropolis fer 'bout a year now, there's a mystery that needs solving! Is Superman really Superman? Who knows? What we *do* know is that the Superman folks are doing a top-notch job on all four monthly Superbooks, tying 'em all together real nicely, and constantly throwing curves our way. (Speaking of curves, how hot is Teri Hatcher, TV's Lois Lane? Awwooooo!) ☆

MORT OF THE MONTH

Now it's time to look at the lamest character of the month, or, as we like to call 'em, the Mort of the Month!

ELASTIC LAD

Jimmy Olsen: Superman's best pal. A fine photojournalist. And one of the goofiest heroes in comic book history. In the Pre-Crisis DC universe, it seems our young klutz tripped, broke an alien bottle Supes found, and was drenched with its contents. Faster than you can say, "Hey, Woozy Winks!", Olsen gained some super-stretchin' abilities that Tyrone "Muggsy" Bogues would kill for. After the freckle-faced freak became Elastic Lad and foiled dastardly criminals for a while, a bit o' Kryptonite radiation sucked his powers away. But were his days as a hero over? Nope. Professor Phineas Potter created a serum that Carrot-top could swig whenever he needed a good stretch, and—bonus!—he became an honorary member of the Legion of Super-Heroes. His origin in the Post-Crisis universe: jerky James blamed the Big S for exposing him to an otherworldly virus that made his body *painfully* elastic. Now Jimmy's all better, and he's not the only one who's grateful.

Gambit ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group. Pitt ™ & © Dale Keown. Vampirella ™ & © Harris Publications Inc.
Lady Death ™ & © Brian Pulido. Shi ™ & © William Elliott Tucci. Superman & Elastic Lad ™ & © DC Comics.

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THE NEW MUTANTS ™ & © 1994 MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

The New Mutants #25

Artist: ***Bill Sienkiewicz***
Writer: ***Chris Claremont***
Publisher: ***Marvel Comics***
Release date: ***March 1985***

There's nothing more fun than trying to figure out what's going on in a Bill Sienkiewicz cover. Our guess for this cover? Two unlucky mutants show up at a Carvel™ just as the soft yogurt machine is possessed by Amahl Farouk (which would only be the nine-billionth time that character possessed something. Enough with that guy!). Aside from that, this fun-packed issue also houses the first appearance of Legion (though it's only a cameo. Check out *New Mutants* #26 for more of an appearance), Professor X's fruity son who, if you don't know, will go back in time, accidentally kill his pop, and undo the entire Marvel Universe timeline. Sound like fun? Mmm-hmm, should be a hoot. So, seeing as how this is a mutant book, and it holds the first appearance of Legion—a mutant who's now seconds away from being thrust into that big ol' spotlight—this ish seems destined to become *muy, muy caliente.*

Value then: $40.00
Value now: $40.00
(Wow...0% increase. Take that, Speculo.)

One year ago this month, the *Wizard* Comic Watch spotlighted *Daredevil* #168, the first appearance of Elektra.

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X-MEN ™ & © 1994 MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

X-Men (original series) #28

Artist: ***Werner Roth***
Writer: ***Roy Thomas***
Publisher: **Marvel *Comics***
Release date: ***January 1967***

12 cents, huh? Wonder if *X-Men* Deluxe was 25 cents back then. Anyway, what makes this particular mutie book stand out over the rest of its X-brethren nowadays, is that it holds the first appearance of Sean Cassidy (that's Banshee to you pseudo-fanboys), who's now playing a major role in the Marvel Universe (and it's about freakin' time!) as the co-headmaster (along with that babe, the White Queen) of Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters. So, even though this back issue is a little pricey (geez, it's like, from the sixties, man), odds are that its popularity will make that old law of supply and demand kick into gear. And hey, on top of all that $$$ talk, this ish is a solid read, too. It's a hoot to read any story from decades past, and see how the characters talk and dress. It's even more fun to look at old letters pages and ads and stuff. If you've never nosed around an old comic before, we highly recommend it. ☆

Value then: $6.00
Value now: $20.00

One year ago this month, the *Wizard* Comic Watch spotlighted *Sandman* #22, the first appearance of Daniel, Lyta Hall's son and possibly the next Sandman.

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IT'S A BANNER MONTH FOR THE SENTINEL OF LIBERTY.

CAPTAIN AMERICA™

CAPTAIN AMERICA #1 MARVEL MILESTONE
By Stan Lee and Jack Kirby

CAPTAIN AMERICA #437
Beginning "Dawn's Early Light"

CAPTAIN AMERICA ASHCAN

CAPTAIN AMERICA COLLECTOR'S PREVIEW
Previewing Captain America's startling new direction and the new Fury of S.H.I.E.L.D. series. Cover by Byrne and Simon.

AVENGERS #4 MARVEL MILESTONE
By Stan Lee and Jack Kirby

MARVEL SPOTLIGHT ON CAPTAIN AMERICA #1-4
Four weekly 48-page specials reprinting Cap's greatest adventures.

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PICKS
FROM THE WIZARD'S HAT

HERE'S A LISTING OF THE HOTTEST BOOKS SHIPPING IN DECEMBER!

Angela #1

ANGELA ™ & © TODD MCFARLANE PRODUCTIONS INC.

Artist: *Greg Capullo*
Writer: *Neil Gaiman*
Release Date: *December*
Cover Price: *$2.25*

In this three-part mini-series, writer Neil Gaiman returns to Spawn's universe to chronicle the further adventures of the angel he introduced in *Spawn* #9. Although Spawn plays a key role, "This is definitely not your usual team-up," Gaiman says. That's not surprising, considering that in their last encounter, Angela was trying to hunt down and kill our favorite hellspawn. This time, though, the tables are turned. When Angela celebrates her birthday by going hunting in a weird tundra world, she's arrested for treason by some angels, who claim that Angela's last meeting with Spawn didn't occur quite the way that she said it did. "It's clear she's being set up," Gaiman says. When she's thrown in jail, her friends head to Earth to convince Spawn to testify at her trial. That takes a lot of very forceful convincing. And once Spawn arrives, "Things get even messier and stranger," Gaiman says. Resolving this messy and strange adventure ultimately takes our less-than-coosome twosome on an excursion through both Heaven and Hell. "This series untangles, in its own way, some of the events from *Spawn* #9," Gaiman reveals. Just for good measure, it also features Angela's Earth-bound boss Gabrielle, shows us how Angela's adventures tie into the Grant Morrison storyline that began in *Spawn* #16, and maintains continuity with the ongoing *Spawn* series. The tale branches off from a key sequence coming up in the main title, and the mini-series's conclusion, according to Gaiman, leaves Spawn on the precipice of "an odyssey of his own" to be completed in his own book. Greg Capullo pencils and inks the first issue, while Mark Pennington picks up the inking chores from Capullo's tight pencils for the final two issues. The results, Gaiman says, "are quite stunning."

X-Men: Alpha #1

X-Men: Alpha ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group

Artist: ***Roger Cruz***
Writers: ***Scott Lobdell, Fabian Nicieza, & Mark Waid***
Release Date: ***December***
Cover Price: ***$3.95***

"I'm getting tons of mail and calls from people who are very nervous and concerned," admits X-Men editor Bob Harras. Small wonder. *X-Men: Alpha* #1 kicks off an epic adventure for the entire X-Men line, offering a story unlike anything seen before in Marvel's mutant world. The catalyst hits in *X-Men* #41, when Prof. Charles Xavier dies—20 years in the past! *Alpha*, hitting the stands in late December, unveils the mutant world of 1995 as it would exist if Xavier had died before forming the X-Men. That premise plays out over the next four months, as the X-titles change their names to reflect the ramifications of these changes. "This is the issue readers really need to have, to understand the background on the new reality and the new world that's being set up," Harras says. "It's a good starting point." The book introduces most of the characters that will be roaming through the X-titles in the coming months, showing off character designs created by the entire X-Men art crew. "We're having a lot of fun with it," says Harras, "and the pages I've seen look great. If we can convey in the comics what we're feeling here about this adventure, I think the readers are going to enjoy the whole package."

Star Wars: Dark Empire II #1

Artist: ***Cam Kennedy***
Writer: ***Tom Veitch***
Release Date: ***December***
Cover Price: ***$2.95***

If you think the first *Dark Empire* mini-series kept you on the edge of your seat, you haven't seen anything yet, says editor Dan Thorsland. This six-issue monthly tale by the same creative team doesn't let up. "Cam and Tom pull out the stops in this story," he says. "Fans of the first series are going to love this one, because Cam and Tom turn the volume way up." Need proof? Among the new characters are Han and Leia's twins, Jaicen and Jaina, who were introduced in the best-selling novels a few years ago. Also new are two lost Jedi Knights who have been hiding out since the Empire rose to power, and who now are ready to rejoin the battle. Add to that all the regulars, throw in "lots and lots and lots of action," as Thorsland says, and you've got a series that doesn't let up. The story focuses on Han and Leia—now pregnant with her third child—who are being stalked across the galaxy by Boba Fett, as they try to carry out a diplomatic mission. Meanwhile, Luke is on a journey to find a cache of Jedi artifacts, including light sabers and ancient training manuals. And over everything looms the shadow of the Emperor, who has big plans for Leia's soon-to-be-born child!

Star Wars: Dark Empire II ™ & © Lucasfilm Ltd.

Azrael #1

Azrael ™ & © DC Comics

Artists: *Barry Kitson & James Pascoe*
Writer: *Denny O'Neil*
Release Date: *December*
Cover Price: *$1.95*

Azrael's getting his own monthly series? But he's like a total loser, isn't he? "Our job is to make readers like Jean Paul Valley again and like him as a superhero figure," says editor Archie Goodwin. "I think Denny O'Neil builds a lot of sympathy and interest for the character with the very first issue." The title picks up shortly after the conclusion of the "KnightsEnd" epic from *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight* #63 and *Showcase '94* #10. "Jean Paul has fallen as far as a person can fall, particularly someone who has it in him to be a hero," Goodwin explains. "We now see the rise of Jean Paul and the Azrael character." A key element will be his struggle to control the System, which was ingrained in him from birth by the Order of St. Dumas. Along the way, we'll learn more about the Order and meet some of its members—including the person who became Azrael when Jean Paul became Batman! The book reunites O'Neil with penciler Barry Kitson and inker James Pascoe, the creative team from DC's *Batman/Punisher: Lake of Fire* team-up. "The art is really nifty stuff," Goodwin says. "We're doing a superhero book, but it's going to be a classy superhero book." Batman plays a recurring role, he adds, but familiarity with "KnightsEnd" will not be a requirement for readers.

The Visitor #1

Artists: *Bernard Chang & Bob McLeod*
Writer: *Kevin VanHook*
Release Date: *December*
Cover Price: *$2.50*

Ready to solve a major mystery? Then put on your thinking cap and seek out the clues that reveal the identity of the Visitor, the newest power in the Valiant Universe. "The Visitor is definitely someone readers have seen before," promises editor Jesse "The Hurricane" Berdinka. "His true identity will be a major surprise for fans. But the clues are all there. It's been set up so well that when readers go back after it's revealed, they'll kick themselves for not figuring it out." Following his (or her) dramatic debut in a two-part November mini-series, the Visitor becomes the first superhero known to the general public—and the public's not all that thrilled by the notion. "The public's reaction will run the gamut from welcome to fear," Berdinka explains. "This is our take on how humans would react to having an alien in their midst." (Soooo, the Visitor's an *alien*, eh?) That variation in opinion extends to the other Valiant heroes, too, who don't all feel at ease with this new kid on the block. The Visitor's first test comes when the equally mysterious Harbinger—introduced in October's *Harbinger Files* #2—becomes his archenemy. "These two are tied together in ways that will be crystal clear when their identities are revealed," Berdinka says. "It'll be cool. The twist we put on it will really knock people's socks off."

Visitor ™ & © Voyager Communications Inc.

MORE PICKS

The following pages list the grooviest titles shipping in December. Books marked by the *Wizard* Recommended Reading RRA sign promise to deliver solid, well-written stories.

AQUAMAN #6

DC COMICS Our fearless fishman takes on Darkseid's underwater terror squad, Deep Six, as they go after the fish guy's first love and newfound son. Hopefully, Aquaman will make those cool telepathic circles come out of his head and get some oh-so-cute dolphins or magnanimous whales to help him out. Don't ya just love when he does that? Meanwhile, Aqualad finds Tula, but...she's *dead!* Hmmm, wonder if Aqualad's gonna jump in a white Ford Bronco and split the scene? By Peter David, Martin Egeland, and Howard Shum. **$1.50**

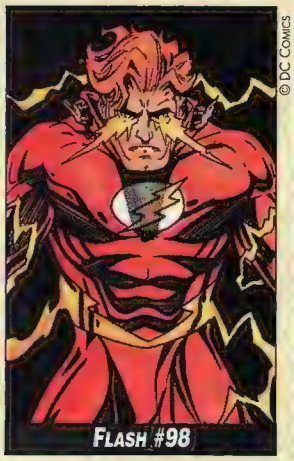
BATMAN BOOKS

DC COMICS In *Batman* #515, it's part 1 (of 4) in "The Troika" (didn't she used to be one o' them Titans?). Bruce is back in a frightening new costume (with Roseanne's picture instead of the Bat insignia on his chest), just in time to tackle some commie pinkos bent on taking control of Gotham's underworld. Over in *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* #35, "The Troika" continues, where Batman trades blows with Col. Vega. If you're looking for part three of that Troika saga thing, then get yourself a copy of *Detective Comics* #682, and check out the Batdude as he tussles with Romana. The whole thing comes to a blistering conclusion in *Robin* #14, where it's *Rocky II*, as Robin and the KGBeast finally have their rematch. ("Except for my kid bein' born...this is the greatest day...in the history of my life.") *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight* #68 sees the conclusion to "Going Sane." Batman gets the last laugh as he ends the Joker's brief brush with sanity. (That'll teach 'im.) ***BATMAN, DETECTIVE*, AND *ROBIN*—$2.50 EACH (SPECIAL EDITIONS), $1.50 EACH (REGULAR EDITIONS); *B: SOTB*—$2.95 (SPECIAL EDITION), $1.95 (REGULAR EDITION); *B: LOTDK*—$1.95**

BATMAN ADVENTURES #29

DC COMICS Bruce Wayne and Talia have themselves a little reunion—they head to Nepal to uncover the mystery of the living snowmen. That's easy; they all must be wearing those cool magical top hats. Also, check out the *Batman Adventures Holiday Special*, put together by a stocking full of creators from the animated series, including Paul Dini and Bruce Timm. **$1.50—*BATMAN ADVENTURES*; $2.95—*HOLIDAY SPECIAL***

© DC Comics
CATWOMAN #18


© DC Comics
FLASH #98

BISHOP #3 (OF 4)

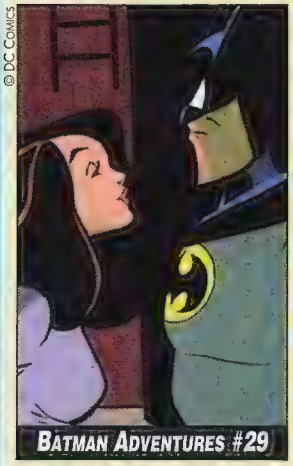
MARVEL Aren't bishops like the lamest pieces—next to pawns—on a chessboard? Well, I don't know if Bishop plays chess this issue, but you'll find that out, along with a plethora of info on the guy-with-the-big-M-plastered-all-over-his-face's past, as well as the future of the X-Men. Plus, there's another one o' those rare future prophecies outlining the fall of the Sentinels in the future. By John Ostrander, Carlos Pacheco, and Cam Smith. **$2.95**

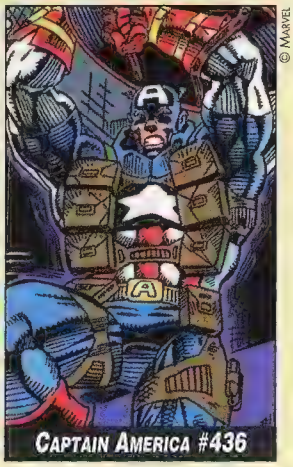
RRA BONE #17

CARTOON BOOKS Hubba, hubba, hubba, who can you trust? It's the original story that *True Lies* was based on. Fone Bone and Thorn are clueless as to who they should believe, as the mystery surrounding the Rat Creatures and the Dragons comes to the forefront. Written and drawn by Jeff Smith, who says of the ish: "This is it. Fone Bone and Thorn confront Gran'ma Ben with the map that Bone found in the desert, and Gran'ma Ben spills her guts. This is it. No joke. We'll keep a *little* bit back. I still have to make a living at this, you know." **$2.95**

CAPTAIN AMERICA #436

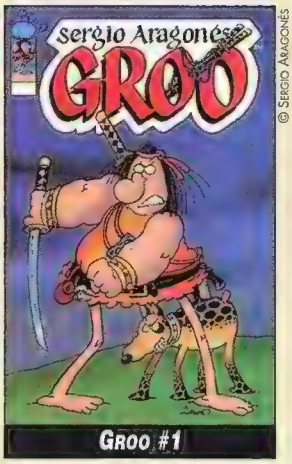
MARVEL "Fighting Chance," Part 12 (of 12). Well, this is it. Cap battles Kid Cobra (mark this date down on the calendar as the official day we ran out of supervillain names) and Mister Hyde, but if he wins, he dies. Hmmm, let's see...what could be in store for Cap's future? Full metal armor? Nah. How 'bout a clone? No, no, that's been done to death. Wait, I've got it...Bucky, his long-dead sidekick from WWII, will return, having spent the last 50 or so years in a block of ice, and give Cap a transfusion, that'll save his life! Nahhhh, that could never happen...could it? By Mark Gruenwald, Dave Hoover, and Dan Bulanadi. **$1.50**


© DC Comics
BATMAN ADVENTURES #29


© Marvel
CAPTAIN AMERICA #436

MORE PICKS

GEOMANCER #6



GROO #1

CATWOMAN #18

DC COMICS Sorry, guys, but she's finally taken. Catwoman is forced into marriage with one o' those snotty European rich guys. That's the bad news, though. The even worse news is that her bosses think she's turned traitor, and send a team out to hunt down the Queen of Steam. By Chuck Dixon, Jim Balent, and Bob Smith. **$1.50**

EVIL ERNIE: REVENGE #3

CHAOS! Dr. Price gets one o' those cool secret weapons, and challenges Ernie (but not Bert) to the proverbial duel to the death—which is followed by the proverbial "shocking outcome!" Also, Lady Death (ya know, if she married Evil Ernie, she'd have to change her name to Lady Ernie. Pretty silly, huh?) loses her grip on the endless graveyard. This issue's blood, sex, and carnage are brought to you by Brian Pulido and Steven Hughes. **$2.50**

RCA FLASH #98

DC COMICS "Terminal Velocity," Part 4 (of 6). Wally, Impulse, Max Mercury, and Jesse "The Body" Quick put it in overdrive as they race to the final confrontation with Kobra. (Hey, this guy's also fighting Cap this month!) Unfortunately, they might not make it before the Flash goes "poof" and disappears in a burst of light. By Mark Waid, Sal Larocca, and Jose Marzan Jr. Waid says, "We finally learn who Wally intends to pick as his successor. Bart's got all the power, Bart's got a lot of drive, but Bart has no discipline. Bart's a good guy, but he's just a kid. We add another dark horse candidate to the list of people who might wear the lightning when 'Terminal Velocity' is over with." **$1.50**

GEOMANCER #6

VALIANT "Riot Gear," Part 2 (of 2). Put a blind, ex-cop-turned-Geomancer and a dinosaur-huntin' Kiowa Apache together, and whaddaya get? Your average couple walking hand-in-hand in the village? No, silly, a Valiant book. Turok and the Geomancer take on Officer Tommy Underwood and his fellow cops-gone-bad. Underwood's not to keen on this, so he puts a price on the Geomancer's head. ($1.98 a lb., I believe.) This is the Big G's chance to avenge himself and his former partner Simpson (who won't be doing any more *Naked Gun* movies or exercise videos). By Maurice Fontenot, Rags Morales, and Ken Branch. **$2.25**

GREEN LANTERN #59

DC COMICS What's green, black, and red all over? A frog and a Milky Way™ in the blender? Nope, it's none other than the newest Green Lantern getting the crap beaten outta him by Dr. Polaris, who is not only lame-looking, but if he lost his medical license, he'd be in X-Factor. By Ron Marz, Darryl Banks, and Romeo Tanghal. **$1.50**

RCA GROO #1

IMAGE In his first issue under the Image imprint, Groo takes on a whole horde of refugees. By Sergio Aragonés and Mark Evanier. According to Evanier, "Sergio had wanted a number one for years and years and years, and this time he gets it. At first, I thought it was because number one issues pay better, but it turns out that that's the highest he can count. We sank Pacific Comics. We sank Eclipse. We destroyed the entire Epic division of Marvel Comics. We're gonna go after Image now, [and] see if we can wipe *those* guys out." **$1.95**

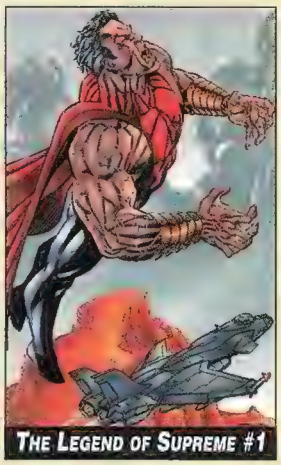
ICON #22

MILESTONE/DC Icon's still gone, and Rocket's still pregnant. Now that she's alone, Rocket must continue his work and confront the biggest gosh-darn decision she's ever made. ("Should I buy the X-Men Deluxe book, or wait two weeks for the cheaper version?") By Dwayne McDuffie, M.D. Bright, and Mike Gustovich. **$1.75**

RCA INCREDIBLE HULK #426

MARVEL It's the final fate of Betty and the Pantheon, as the Hulk is unable to stop any of what happens. And hey—look for Mercy's return in this issue, which begins the deluxe/regular version thing for this series. By Peter David, Liam Sharpe, and Robin Riggs. David says of the issue, "It's Liam's first entire issue. When I first started getting in the pages, it made me a little antsy, because Liam was turning in pages that had like 16 panels on them. But much to my amazement, it scripted just beautifully, and the more the pages came in, and the more I got the hang of scripting to Liam's style, the more excited I got about it. For those people who are tired of books that are nothing but big splash page after big splash page, *Hulk* #426 is a welcome, welcome change." **$1.95—DELUXE EDITION; $1.50—REGULAR EDITION**

ICON #22



THE LEGEND OF SUPREME #1

MORE PICKS

© TEKNO•COMICX

LOST UNIVERSE #1

© FRANK MILLER

SIN CITY: THE BIG FAT KILL #2

THE LEGEND OF SUPREME #1

IMAGE "Revelations" begins when reporter Maxine Winslow starts snoopin' around to find out exactly who Supreme really is. Meanwhile, the Big S (well, I guess it's really the Other Big S) declares war on genetic engineering. You'll also get to learn some of his biggest, deepest, and darkest secrets! (He likes to dress in women's clothing, make bad films, and pal around with washed-up horror movie stars.) By Keith Giffen, Robert Loren Fleming, Jeff Johnson, and Dan Panosian. **$2.50**

LOST UNIVERSE #1

TEKNO•COMIX A band of intrepid explorers travel to the distant world of Kronos to find the lost secret of the Old Ones, an ancient alien race. Well, gee, smack me in the head with a two-by-four and call me Sally, but if you're an ancient alien race (key word here is "ancient"), can't you think of a better name than the Old Ones? Unless they're somehow related to Neil, Mike, Vivian, and Rick from *The Young Ones*. By D.C. Fontana and Lawrence Watt-Evans. **$1.95**

RSA PRIME #19

MALIBU One of Dr. Gross's creatures kidnaps Kevin's girlfriend Kelly (hey, Prime, can you spell "jailbait"?), and wouldn't you know it, Prime is blamed for it. By Gerard Jones and Steve Erwin. **$1.95**

PROPHET #9

IMAGE "Extreme Sacrifice," Prologue. Darkthorne gets sick of Prophet's constant interference, and sends out the warrior Crypt to finish him off. Hey, considering how long it takes Platt to get an issue out, Prophet's safe until Easter. By Rob Liefeld & Stephen Platt. **$2.50**

ROGUE #2 (OF 4)

MARVEL Hey, cheri, what's up with Rogue? The Assassins Guild is hunting down Gambit, yet she disses him to go looking for that two-timin' Cody instead. Where's the justice in that, huh? What about her relationship with Gambit? I *knew* she was just leadin' him on. Wench. By Howard Mackie, Mike Wieringo, and Terry Austin. **$2.95**

SANDMAN #67

VERTIGO/DC "The Kindly Ones" continues. Lyta Hall unearths some shocking news about Daniel's disappearance. Meanwhile, Rose gets some bad news concerning mourning or possibly rejoicing within the Dreaming. Ya know, for months we've been hearing rumors about ol' Morpheus biting the bullet. The clues have been there, and it seems quite obvious that it's gonna happen. But maybe that's what we're supposed to think, and in reality, some other major character is going to die. Or maybe we're *supposed* to think that it's too obvious and someone else *is* gonna die, so that when he really does die, we'll be shocked. Or maybe... By Neil Gaiman and Marc Hempel. **$1.95**

RSA SIN CITY: THE BIG FAT KILL #2

LEGEND/DARK HORSE There's trouble right here in Sin City, with a capital T, that rhymes with C, that stands for cool. Uhh, anyways—Dwight and his gal pals deal with five dead cops. Normally, this wouldn't be such a pain in the butt for the ladies in Old Town, but their hands are already full, since they're also trying to stop the mob from taking the town over. It's plenty of fun for the whole mature contingent of the family, brought to you by that swell guy, Frank Miller. **$2.95**

SPAWN #27

IMAGE I'd say it's about time for a new villain. Well, lookie here, who ever said McFarlane's not easy to work with? Spawn faces his newest enemy, Deadline. (Get it? "Deadline"? Ha.) No, no, just kidding. He's really called the Curse. (But isn't Deadline a cooler name? Come on, Todd, change it before the kiddies notice.) By Todd McFarlane. **$1.95**

RSA THE SPECTRE #26

DC COMICS Whoa! Ready for a Christmas gift that even jolly ol' Saint Nick can't deliver? The Spectre promises Father Craemer that for one full day, not one single person will be murdered throughout the entire planet! By John Ostrander and John Ridgway. Ostrander says of the ish, "Unfortunately, the Spectre usually *reacts* to people being killed. So, Father Cramer becomes very concerned about what happens if he tries to [prevent a murder] and fails. It is sort of our Spectre Christmas story...in the way that [the film] *Nightmare Before Christmas* is a Christmas story. Not a whole lot of tinfoil and holly, but I think it comes together nicely." **$1.95**

© TODD MCFARLANE

SPAWN #27

© MARVEL

SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #221

MORE PICKS

Spider-Man Books

MARVEL In *Amazing Spider-Man* #398, it's part 3 (of 4) of the "Web of Death" storyline. It's a regular soap opera as Spidey slips away from Doc Ock and Stunner, makes up with Mary Jane after discovering she's pregnant, and faces the fact that poison is running rampant through his body. Then swing on by *Spectacular Spider-Man* #221 for the conclusion to "Web of Death." A much-less-than-healthy Webhead fights Doc Ock...to the death!!! That's right: I said death! And what's even more shocking is who bites it. When you're done crying over that title (and who isn't these days?), pick up *Web of Spider-Man* #121. It's part 3 (of 4) of the "Web of Life" storyline where the Scarlet Spider (ugh) starts fitting into his hero role. Also, Kaine's relationship to the Ugh and the real Spider-Man will lead to some pretty harsh results culminating in *Amazing* #400. And for the conclusion to the "Web of Life" storyline, check out *Spider-Man* #55. The Spider-Clone (ugh)—oops, I mean the Scarlet Ugh—tackles the Grim Hunter. Oh, yeah, there's also the death of a major character in that one. And to solve that insomnia problem of yours, check out *Spider-Man Unlimited* #8, where Spider-Man and the Scarlet Spider (ugh) join forces to fight some bad guys. **$1.50 EACH; $1.95—*SPIDER-MAN*; $3.95—*SPIDER-MAN UNLIMITED***

Star Wars: Dark Lords of the Sith, Book 1 #3

DARK HORSE This issue, the forces of the Dark Side get first blood, as they blast those silly Jedis, who're just sittin' around swappin' stories at some peaceful meeting and playin' Uno™. The stench of imminent warfare pushes Ulik to make quite a bold decision. A decision that could end up costing him his life. By Tom Veitch, Kevin Anderson, Chris Gossett, and Bob Wiacek. **$2.50**

Strange Tales

MARVEL Oh, man, check this one out! You not only get the Thing, Dr. Strange, Nick Fury, Wyatt Wingfoot, and the Human Torch (quite the lineup), but you get to see them trade punches with the Golden Gator, the Sage-Wolf, and the Spiny beast-demon. But wait, there's more! This ish features the epitome o' monsters: Orrgo the Unconquerable! Yearrrrrgh!!!!!! Mmwrrrowww!!! By Kurt Busiek and Ricardo Villagran. **$6.95**

© Marvel

Strange Tales

© Harris

Vengeance of Vampirella #9

© Marvel

X-Men #43

© Rob Liefeld

Youngblood: Year One #2

Superboy #12

DC COMICS Boy, Superboy's got it tough. First he's gotta save Rex Leech from the vicious coils of Copperhead, then he's gotta tackle his worst possible nightmare: school! By Karl Kesel, Tom Grummett, and Dan Davis. **$1.50**

Superman Books

DC COMICS In *Superman: The Man of Steel* #41, Babe (is this the John Byrne chick, or the Bart Sears chick?) becomes even more bloodthirsty, and a pathetically naive and just plain goofy-looking Jimmy Olsen finds his life threatened. Over in *Superman* #97, Shadow-Dragon (who's slightly savage) makes his Metropolitan debut, where he steals some highly confidential S.T.A.R. Labs stuff that contains some secret info on Supes. Skip on down to *Adventures of Superman* #520, where 100 criminals commit 100 crimes at midnight. Does the big guy have what it takes to stop 'em all? And to round out your monthly dose o' Supes, check out *Action Comics* #707, where the long-haired Man o' Steel dukes it out with Shadow-Dragon, who's still trying to get all the info he can on Superman. **$1.50 EACH**

The Torch of Liberty Special

LEGEND/DARK HORSE Fresh from the back-up stories in the late, great (and very much missed) *Danger Unlimited* mini-series, the Torch fights a commie-paranoid society in the '50s. This one-shot features four serial-like chapters, pitting the Torch against Lenin's ghost. (Don't tell Colossus or Paul McCartney. And this joke is reeeeally stretching it a bit. Just a bit.) Written by John Byrne and drawn by Kieron Dwyer, who, by the way, can draw one mean Nazi. **$2.50**

UltraForce #4

MALIBU Holy spit! It's an origin issue! (Atalon's, to be precise.) Atalon has Ghoul in his clutches, and is also about to bless the world with his arsenal of nuclear missiles. Also, Pixx has a mental breakdown after hearing thousands of kids chant her name in an effort to win a stupid TV phone-in contest. No, no, that's not right.

MORE PICKS

She really heads out to rescue Ghoul and save that whole Earth thing. By Gerard Jones and George Pérez. **$1.95**

Vengeance of Vampirella #9

HARRIS In the hopes of defeating a vicious demon race, Adam Van Helsing takes the drug HYDE-25, and he gets all weird and stuff. While under the drug's influence, he crosses paths with Samuel Bishop, AKA Jackass (uh, there's no joke in this one, kiddies. Honest.), and it's up to Vampirella to stop them both. By Tom Sniegoski and Buzz. Also, check out *Vampirella* #0, which fills in the holes between the "Morning in America" saga and the "Dracula War" storyline. By Mark Moretti and Jimmy Palmiotti. **$2.95 EACH**

X #10

DARK HORSE "The War for Arcadia" continues as X battles the Judgment Knights—a bunch o' renegade cops that have their own violent views on ridding crime from the city. (Hey, lemme get my camcorder!) Also, when a number of broken-bodied murder victims wash up on shore, you just know somethin' bad is coming. By Steven Grant, Chris Warner, and Tim Bradstreet. **$2.50**

X-Men Books

MARVEL Jump on (or bail out) before it's too late (depends on how you look at it). *Uncanny X-Men* #321 features the return of Lilandra to Earth, spouting prophecies about the universe's demise. And while that's going on, the X-Men head into the past (when sales were good, but not nearly as good as now) and try to stop Legion from changing history. Over in *X-Men* #43, Legion (who's now in the past) attempts to assassinate Magneto, and it's up to a young Charles Xavier and his freakish team of X-Men to stop Legion and keep history intact. (Boy, DC's continuity has nuthin' on these guys.) **$1.95 EACH—DELUXE EDITIONS; $1.50 EACH—REGULAR EDITIONS**

Youngblood: Year One #2

IMAGE It's a peek at the past and a chance to figure out what the heck that whole Youngblood thing is all about. The very first Youngblood team makes its public debut just in time for Giger and his Cybernet unit to attack. Also, while Shaft gains some popularity in the FBI, he's troubled over his father's (Col. Bravo) disappearance. By Kurt Busiek and Rob Liefeld. **$2.50**

good & cheap

Good-readin' books you can still pick up cheap!

Uncanny X-Men #190-#191

Writer: *Chris Claremont*
Artists: *John Romita Jr. and Dan Green*
Current Total Value: *$9.50*

With the time-traveling possibilities of the upcoming "After Xavier" storyline in mind, what better time to take a look at one of the classic reality-warping stories from the X-Men's past, *Uncanny X-Men* #190 & #191, presented by the dynamite team of Chris Claremont and John Romita Jr.?

The story starts out with all of Manhattan facing the sorcerous threat of Kulan Gath, as he transforms the urban island into a medieval realm, full of swords, spells, and no mutant powers. *Everything* changes. Those who have fallen prey to Gath's master spell fight for him. So, you have the New Mutants, the Morlocks, and half the Avengers (Vision and the Scarlet Witch) slugging it out with some of the X-Men (Storm, Rogue, Colossus, and Nightcrawler), Spider-Man (who—in a totally neato, gross scene—is mystically crucified! Ouch!), Callisto, and the rest of the Avengers (Captain America, Wasp, and Starfox).

It's quite the challenge for the heroes. I mean, the only thing that rivals Gath's vast sorcery is his ego—which puts Dr. Doom's to shame—so you gotta love seeing the good guys finally pull the rug out from under him.

With more deaths per issue than a Wolverine/Brood grudge match, and guest-stars galore, *Uncanny X-Men* #190-#191 is a must-have for X-Men fans. Plus, throw in the first appearance of the robotic mutant-killer Nimrod in the epilogue, and you have an instant classic. ☆

TOP 100

Here's the list for NOVEMBER...
a countdown of the most-ordered titles as reported by Diamond Comic Distributors Inc.

(CE=Collector's Edition)

1. **X-Men Deluxe #40 (Marvel)**
2. **Spawn #26 (Image)**
3. **Uncanny X-Men Deluxe #320 (Marvel)**
4. **Generation X Deluxe #3 (Marvel)**
5. **Rogue #1 (Marvel)**
6. **Wolverine Deluxe #89 (Marvel)**
7. **WetWorks #4 (Image)**
8. **WildC.A.T.s #15 (Image)**
9. **Mighty Morphin' P. Rangers #1 (Hamilton)**
10. **Bishop #2 (Marvel)**
11. Pitt #7 (Image)
12. Batman vs. Predator II: Bloodmatch #2 (DC)
13. X-Force Deluxe #42 (Marvel)
14. Batman #514 (DC)
15. Team 7 #2 (Image)
16. Superman #96 (DC)
17. X-Factor Deluxe #110 (Marvel)
18. Adventures of Superman #519 (DC)
19. Cyberforce #9 (Image)
20. Superman: The Man of Steel #40 (DC)
21. Amazing Spider-Man #397 (Marvel)
22. Detective Comics #681 (DC)
23. Action Comics #706 (DC)
24. Mr. Hero—The Newmatic Man #1 (Tekno•Comix)
25. Primortals #1 (Tekno•Comix)
26. Spider-Man #54 (Marvel)
27. Incredible Hulk #425 CE (Marvel)
28. Prophet #8 (Image)
29. X-Men 2099 #16 (Marvel)
30. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #34 (DC)
31. Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #67 (DC)
32. Web of Spider-Man #120 (Marvel)
33. Spectacular Spider-Man #220 (Marvel)
34. Cable Deluxe #19 (Marvel)
35. Backlash #2 (Image)
36. Youngblood Year One #1 (Image)
37. Robin #13 (DC)
38. Excalibur Deluxe #85 (Marvel)
39. Star Wars: Tales...Dark Lords...Sith #2 (D. Horse)
40. StormWatch #17 (Image)
41. Silver Surfer #100 CE (Marvel)
42. Catwoman #17 (DC)
43. Black and White #2 (Image)
44. Green Lantern #58 (DC)
45. Battlestone #1 (Image)
46. Superboy #11 (DC)
47. Sandman #66 (DC)
48. Fantastic Four #396 (Marvel)
49. Sin City: The Big Fat Kill #1 (Dark Horse)
50. Savage Dragon #15 (Image)
51. Shi #5 (Crusade)
52. Deathblow #11 (Image)
53. Beavis & Butt-Head #11 (Marvel)
54. Spider-Man 2099 #27 (Marvel)
55. Ash #1 (Event)
56. Venom: Separation Anxiety #2 (Marvel)
57. Vengeance of Vampirella #8 (Harris)
58. WildC.A.T.s Adventures #3 (Image)
59. Shaman's Tears #3 (Image)
60. Sin City: The Babe...& Other Stories (Dark Horse)
61. Codename: Stryke Force #9 (Image)
62. Badrock & Company #3 (Image)
63. Team Youngblood #15 (Image)
64. Ghost Rider #57 (Marvel)
65. Extreme Justice #0 (DC)
66. Brigade #14 (Image)
67. Deadly Duo #1 (Image)
68. Bloodstrike #16 (Image)
69. Supreme #21 (Image)
70. ShadowHawk #15 (Image)
71. Hulk 2099 #2 (Marvel)
72. Evil Ernie: Revenge #2 (Chaos!)
73. Force Works #7 (Marvel)
74. Steel #11 (DC)
75. Chains of Chaos—Link One (Harris)
76. Youngblood Strikefile #9 (Image)
77. Newmen #8 (Image)
78. Fantastic Force #3 (Marvel)
79. Lobo #12 (DC)
80. Flash #97 (DC)
81. Aquaman #5 (DC)
82. Captain America #435 (Marvel)
83. Daredevil #336 (Marvel)
84. Iron Man #312 (Marvel)
85. Showcase '95 #1 (DC)
86. Doom's IV Sourcebook #1 (Image)
87. Spider-Man: Friends & Enemies #1 (Marvel)
88. What If? #69 (Marvel)
89. Doom 2099 #25 CE (Marvel)
90. The Books of Magic #9 (DC)
91. Ren & Stimpy #26 (Marvel)
92. Star Trek: TNG/DS9 #2 (DC/Malibu)
93. Spider-Man: The Power of Terror #1 (Marvel)
94. Ghost Rider 2099 #9 (Marvel)
95. Thor #482 (Marvel)
96. Justice League America #95 (DC)
97. Vamps #6 (DC)
98. X-Men Spectacular #1 (Marvel)
99. New Warriors #55 (Marvel)
100. Star Trek: DS9/TNG #2 (Malibu/DC)

what was hOt 1 yeAr ago...

1. Uncanny X-Men #308 (Marvel)
2. Spawn #18 (Image)
3. X-Men #28 (Marvel)
4. Ninjak #1 (Valiant)
5. Action Comics #695 CE (DC)
6. WildC.A.T.s #6 (Image)
7. X-Men 2099 #4 (Marvel)
8. Cyberforce #2 (Image)
9. Batman #503 (DC)
10. Superman #85 (DC)

2 yeArs ago...

1. Superman #75 CE (DC)
2. Pitt #1 (Image)
3. X-Men #16 (Marvel)
4. Bloodshot #1 (Valiant)
5. Uncanny X-Men #296 (Marvel)
6. X-Force #18 (Marvel)
7. Doom 2099 #1 (Marvel)
8. X-Factor #86 (Marvel)
9. Spawn #7 (Image)
10. Spider-Man 2099 #3 (Marvel)

3 yeArs ago...

1. X-Men #4 (Marvel)
2. Wolverine #50 (Marvel)
3. Robin II: The Joker's Wild #2 CE (DC)
4. Uncanny X-Men #284 (Marvel)
5. Robin II: The Joker's Wild #3 CE (DC)
6. Spider-Man #18 (Marvel)
7. Amazing Spider-Man #358 (Marvel)
8. X-Factor #74 (Marvel)
9. Daredevil #300 (Marvel)
10. Batman vs. Predator #1 CE (DC)

WIZARD™ CONTEST

HI. I'M **BATTLESTONE.**™

MOST OF YOU KNOW ME AS THE NO-NONSENSE UNDEAD WARRIOR AND LEADER OF THE ELITE STRIKE TEAM BRIGADE, BUT I ALSO GET MY ROCKS OFF ENTERING THESE NEAT *WIZARD* CONTESTS.

IN FACT, I SUGGEST YOU DO THE SAME, OR I MIGHT TAKE IT THE WRONG WAY AND OFF YOU. HAVE FUN.

Grand Prize (One winner):
An original piece of framed Marat Mychaels art featuring Battlestone, drawn exclusively for this contest.

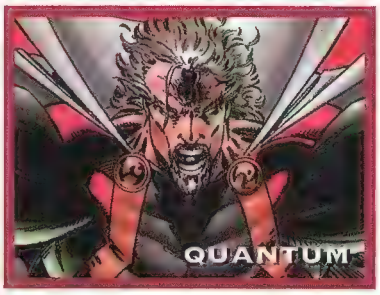
Second Prize (Three winners):
An original piece of framed art from the pages of *Brigade*.

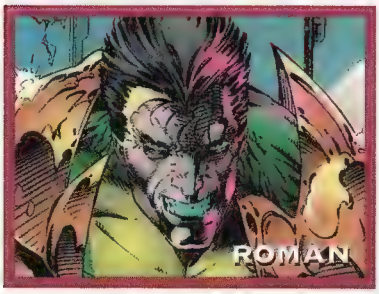
Third Prize (Ten winners):
A gold *Brigade* #1 signed by Marat Mychaels.

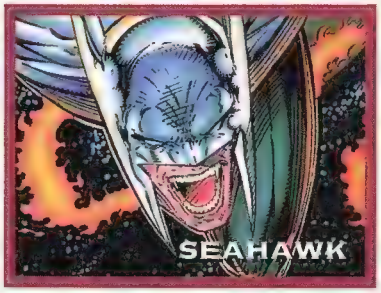
Fourth Prize (Fifty winners):
A copy of *Battlestone* #1 signed by Marat Mychaels.

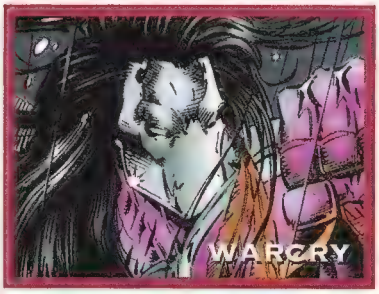
Fifth Prize (Fifty winners):
A copy of *Brigade* #12 signed by Anthony Winn.

THE WAY TO WIN SOME OF THAT COOL STUFF IS TO TAKE A GANDER AT THE EXTREME CHARACTERS BELOW, AND FIGURE OUT WHICH THREE *HAVE NOT* BEEN MEMBERS OF BRIGADE. THEN READ BELOW FOR THE REST OF THE SCOOP.









ONCE YOU'VE FIGURED OUT WHO DOESN'T BELONG, FILL OUT THE OFFICIAL BATTLESTONE COUPON LISTED BELOW AND MAIL THAT SUCKER OF TO:

Battlestone Contest
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920-2064

BETTER HIGH-TAIL IT— THIS CONTEST ENDS FEBRUARY 24, 1995, AND IF YOU'RE LATE, YOU MAY BE PAYIN' A VISIT TO PROJECT: BORN AGAIN.

Legal Crap

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Extreme Studios, their immediate families, and anybody who's got one o' them little itty-bitty skulls on their forehead. (Hear that, Mystique?) Print your name, address, city, state, zip code, telephone number with area code, age, and the three non-Brigade members on the official entry form, a three-by-five-inch index card, or a standard postcard. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry to Battlestone Contest, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064. No mechanical reproductions will be accepted. All entries become the property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state, and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winner. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes are offered. The prizes will be awarded in the name of the contest winner and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated, or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purpose and rules hereof. There's nuthin' like a good pair of pants. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by February 24, 1995.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. The prize winners will be selected in a random drawing from all properly completed entry forms received at contest headquarters. The random drawing will be conducted on February 27, 1995, by Wizard Press.

For a list of winners, available after March 17, 1995 send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Battlestone Winners, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064, or just keep watching *Wizard*!

Warcry ™ & © Danny Miki. All other characters shown here ™ & © Rob Liefeld.

PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

COUPON
Official Battlestone Entry

I am:

NAME (PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY) DATE OF BIRTH

HOME ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

PHONE (DON'T FORGET YOUR AREA CODE)

NON-BRIGADE MEMBER #1

NON-BRIGADE MEMBER #2

NON-BRIGADE MEMBER #3

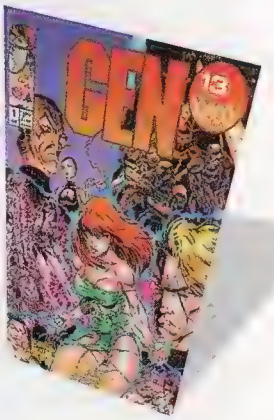
TOP TEN COMICS

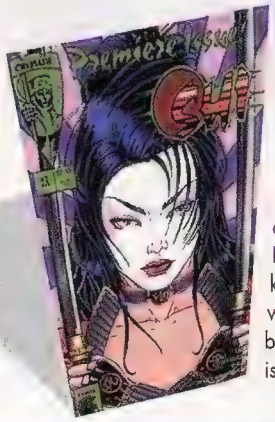
***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. Here are this month's hottest back issues.**

1. GEN[13] #1

ARTISTS: J. Scott Campbell and Alex Garner WRITER: Brandon Choi

Pop quiz: What does the Gen in *Gen*[13] stand for? Give up? Generation. As in the 13th generation of Americans. See, you learn something new every day. Anyway, seeing as how this is the gang's fifth month in a row in the number one slot, ya pretty much get the picture that this book is full of 113 percent pure hotness. Why, if you took a bunch of jalepeño peppers, Tabasco sauce, and crushed red peppers, mixed 'em all together in a big bowl with some kimchi, wasabi, and a pint or two of Szechuan garlic sauce, and then dumped in a jar or three of Paul Newman's Salsa™ (and none of that wimpy, mild crap, either!), you still wouldn't have anything nearly as hot as *Gen*[13] is nowadays. Though you would have the makings for an enema taken straight out of a Clive Barker novel.





2. SHI #1

ARTISTS: William Tucci and Harvey Mercadoocasio WRITERS: William Tucci and and Peter Gutierrez

Not lacking for heat itself, *Shi* #1 marks its seventh month on the Top Ten chart, up two spots from last month and showing no signs of weakness. Ya know, I kinda like a strong woman, especially one with geisha makeup. But don't let the white face fool you; this here's one dangerous she-ninja. Heck, Shi's so dangerous that them Gen[13] kiddies better watch out. This is the highest-ranking Bill Tucci's book has ever seen, and if things keep going the way they're goin', the Gen kids may find themselves in the back seat of this bus. And if you're thinkin' this whole bad girl trend that's helped *Shi* climb the charts is destined to go the way of Punisher guest appearances and #0 issues, yeah, yer probably right, but with *Shi*'s terrific art and storytelling, it looks like *Shi*'s here for the long haul.

3. LADY DEATH #1

ARTIST: Steven Hughes
WRITER: Brian Pulido

™ & © Brian Pulido.

Here's a fun game you can try at home. Take the titles from the top three books this month, add a couple more words, and try to make a cool sentence. It's easy. Gen, shi one mean Lady Death. Or how about: That Gen lady, shi death. Go ahead, give it a whirl. Anywho, the Lady herself here's got quite a sour-lookin' puss on that purty li'l face o' hers. Maybe she's just sore 'cause her book is still stuck in the number three spot. It could be worse. She might've been in a Valiant book—then she wouldn't be in the Top Ten at all (hee, hee, hee...boy, we're gonna get a nasty phone call tomorrow, but that joke was worth it). Anywho, with her mini-series going strong, her current role in the *Evil Ernie: Revenge* mini-series, and another solo mini-series planned for '95, ol' L.D. is livin' life high on the hog.

Gen[13] ™ & © Aegis Entertainment DBA WildStorm Productions. *Shi* ™ & © William Elliott Tucci.

4. GEN[13] #2

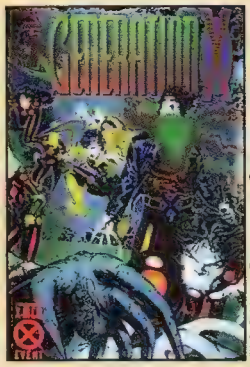
ARTISTS: J. Scott Campbell and Alex Garner
WRITERS: Brandon Choi and Jeff Mariotte

What may be the next hot trend in comics has seemingly snuck up and bit us right on the keister. D'ya see it (or feel it, as the case may be)? C'mon, *Gen*[13] is all over the chart, Marvel's *Generation X* is kicking ass, and though DC's *Superboy* and *Robin* aren't on the charts (yet), they're gettin' mighty warm, and they're all hot books starring teen heroes. Now, if DC was thinkin' straight, we'd see a book called *The Titans* (*sans* that hokey "Teen" or "New"), consisting of Robin, Superboy, the Spoiler, the Ray, Impulse, and Anima—written by Chuck Dixon and drawn by Tom Grummett. That book would kick serious butt! It'd also give 'em a reason to cancel that hideous *New Titans* book. Why does that comic even exist? And explain *Extreme Justice* to me. And *Justice League Task Force*? Somebody get me a bat.

™ & © Aegis Entertainment DBA WildStorm Productions

5. GENERATION X #1

ARTISTS: Chris Bachalo amd Mark Buckingham
WRITER: Scott Lobdell



™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group

This newest incarnation of new mutants seems to be pretty big with the fans. Yeah, like that's a big surprise. A Marvel X-book (that *ends* in X—ooh, original!), starring teens, *and* a number one. Sounds like a hit to me. With some reliable scripting by Lobdell, and excellent art by Bachalo and that Buckingham guy, this mutant book's got real potential. It's also got a fella named Skin who can do all sortsa neato, gross things with his epidermis! Cool! Word of warning with this one, though: reading this book in direct sunlight can be a tad hazardous to your health. That excito-inticing chromium cover can burn out your retinas in no time flat. If you're real careful, though, you and a nearby friend can send like secret codes and stuff to each other at night, by shining flashlights off the cover in morse code.

6. VENGEANCE OF VAMPIRELLA #1

ARTIST: Buzz
WRITER: Tom Sniegoski

It was a lot tougher to come up with superheroes in the Silver Age than it is now. In the Silver Age, thanks to Marvel, we were introduced to characters that seemed like living and breathing people, characters that we could associate with. Heck, characters that *were* us! Not an easy thing to do. Now, just slap two handfuls of silicon, a swatch of spandex, and an attitude problem on a chick and, boom, you're on the *Wizard* Top Ten. That's not to say that some of these books aren't cool to read, though. Vampi's pretty neat. Lady Death's good. Shi kicks butt. Lady Rawhide has tremendous potential. It's just that this whole bad girl thing is a fad, and when it breaks, only those with much more than window dressing will stick around.

™ & © Harris Publications Inc.

7. ZORRO #3

ARTISTS: Mike Mayhew, Andy Mushynsky, and Hilary Barta
WRITER: Don McGregor

Tight leather. Whips. Guy in a mask. Kinda reminds you of that scene from *Pulp Fiction*, eh? Boy, that was one plot twist I didn't see coming. Gave me nightmares for a week, too. Anyway, if you thought *Zorro* made the charts due to its story content, no dice. While *Zorro* remains one of the best kept secrets in comics today, with awesome stories and excellent art (like a whole lot more Topps books. Go read *Mars Attacks* and *Lone Ranger and Tonto*!), this baby made the grade due to its housing the first appearance of Lady Rawhide, the *femme fatale* who's makin' Zorro's life mighty difficult these days. So, with L.R. riding the bad girl wave, her continued appearances in *Zorro*, and a *Lady Rawhide* mini-series in the works for '95, expect Ms. Rawhide to hang around the charts for a spell.

™ & © Zorro Productions Inc.

8. FLASH #92

ARTISTS: Mike Wieringo and Jose Marzan Jr.
WRITER: Mark Waid

Ya know, for one of the fastest guys in the world, this hero's book is certainly taking its sweet little time moving to the top. Actually, it's taken a slight dip in the polls this month, down a notch from last month's #7. But hey, with *Flash* #100 around the corner, and Impulse (who debuts in this ish) due to get his own series in '95, don't count this baby out yet. With fan interest in the Flash the strongest it's been in years (due in part to the rumors that there'll soon be a new Flash in town...bye-bye, Wally), DC looks to have another winner in its hands (and apparently another dead/incapacitated hero). Also, for the past year or so, it's enjoyed some funky artwork by Mike Wieringo, who joins seven other up-and-coming artist-types in our "Eight to the Fore" feature (see page 120).

™ & © DC Comics

9. WONDER WOMAN #88

ARTIST: John Ross
WRITER: Christopher Priest

™ & © DC Comics

Bwah-hah-hah! Heh, heh, heh. Ho, ho, ho. Snicker...sorry, couldn't help it. Heh, heh. I mean, come on, it's *Wonder Woman*. Yeah, there's a cool Brian Bolland cover with Wondie rubbing Supes's belly, but like I said, it's *Wonder Woman*. There're no hot new artists or writers on board, either; this issue not only has a guest writer and a guest penciler, but it even has a guest inker! What does that tell you about the regular creative team on this book? Wait a minute...you mean the only reason this issue's been heating up is that it's the first appearance of Circe as a Bad Girl? Oh, puhleeze. She's only on the last page, anyway, and most of the book has Wonder Woman helping out Supes in war-torn Metropolis. And while it's great to see not one, but two DC books in the Top Ten...it's still *Wonder Woman*.

10. SHI #2

ARTIST: William Tucci
WRITER: William Tucci

After a two-month hiatus from the charts, Ana Ishikawa's second issue returns. Bill Tucci's Samurai-slashin' Shi is yet another o' those Bad Girl babes that have taken the top ten by storm, and on top of that, retailers were super-conservative when they ordered this ish (even more so than #1), so you can guess how few of these once-low-profile books are swimming around out there. So, on top of the smothering fan demand, we have ourselves a fairly limited supply. You all know how *that* story ends. And...hey, wait a minute. I just noticed that all the Bad Girls are women! How come there aren't any guy Bad Girls? Isn't that like sexist and discriminatory and stuff? *Guys* can wear bustiers and thongs, too! In fact, some guys rather enjoy it. (Boy, what a great way to end this edition o' Top Ten Comics. See ya next time, kids.) ☆

™ & © William Elliott Tucci

RIPCLAW • WARBLADE ROUND TWO

SCOTT CLARK
SAL REGLA
STEVE SEAGLE

THE GRUDGE MATCH OF THE DECADE CONTINUES AS TWO CUTTING EDGE HEROES RIP THROUGH THIS 4 ISSUE MINISERIES.

WARBLADE: ENDANGERED SPECIES #2.

ON SALE IN FEBRUARY FROM WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS AND IMAGE COMICS.

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Wizard Market WATCH

by Jon Warren and Marc Wilkofsky

A Strong '94 & A Promising '95

"Is it over yet?" That may have been one of the more oft-asked questions on collectors' lips last year. While 1993 was filled with brilliant works like DC's *Death* mini-series, Malibu's *Prime*, and Cartoon Books's *Bone*, the operative word was "filled," and a sizable glut of product caused the comic book market to implode. There was simply too much product out there, leaving publishers and retailers to groan as the number of readers, suffering over what to buy, plummeted. The industry got back on its collective feet this year, however, with a still sizable amount of product but with more of a solid, secure fan following. So, other questions may be floating around the minds of industry watchers: "Will the market stay this strong?" could be one, and "Can the back issue market survive?" is assuredly another, the latter due to the significant, almost unprecedented lack of "leftover" funds in new-issue-hoarding buyers. Although there might be reason enough for people to worry, 1994 has certainly done its part to ease the always alert minds of market watchers and participants.

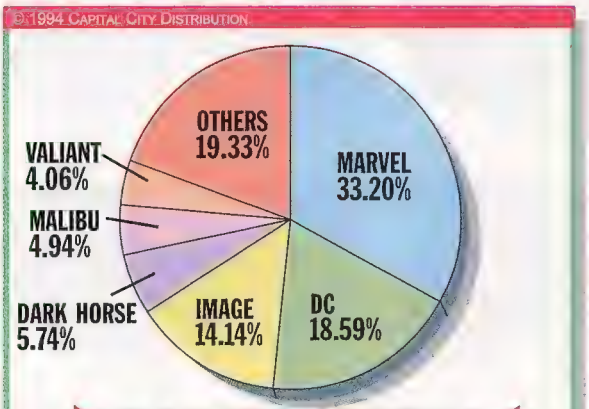
1994's RECENT HOT BOOKS (1991-1994)

MARVEL: FROM PLATT TO PHALANX

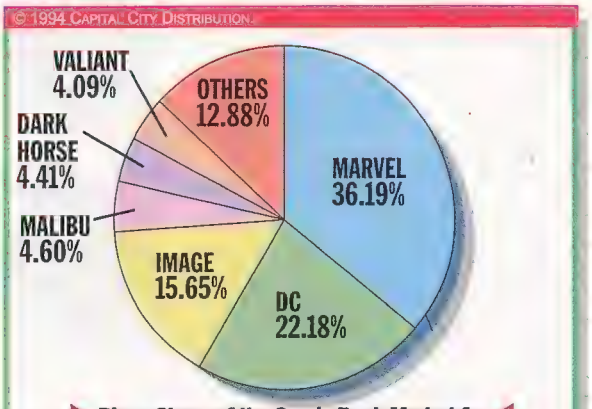
More questions about today's industry abound. For instance, what market trend started this year off? We would have to say Platt-itis. Not that fan fury over the Talent Flavor of the Month is anything new in the comic world, but after a totally new artist by the name of Stephen Platt created no less than a fiery frenzy in the market in late '93, it was no surprise to see even the industry's fickle collectors keep the heat going in '94. The excitement over Mr. Platt's work on Marvel's *Moon Knight* caused the thunderous interest in the character's last six issues—#55 to January's #60—to extend well into this year. *Moon Knight #55*, Platt's first full comic work, raised in value from $10 to $25 in just four months, January to April.

Other carry-over Marvel books from '93 sharing market importance in early

The industry got back on its collective feet this year, with a still sizable amount of product but with more of a solid, secure fan following.



Dollar Share of the Comic Book Market for OCTOBER, according to Capital City Distribution



Piece Share of the Comic Book Market for OCTOBER, according to Capital City Distribution

Dollar Share: In October, practically every standing stayed exactly the same as they were the month before. Marvel saw a gain of 0.28 points, probably thanks to its *Generation X* and Spider-Clone books, and DC's share decreased 0.42. Image dropped 0.40 points, but it still looks like the company's slowly bridging the gap between itself and DC. At 0.65 points, the greatest gainer was Dark Horse, thanks to its new *Star Wars: Tales of the Jedi* book and half the *Batman vs. Predator II* share.

Piece Share: Dark Horse is the winner here also, mainly due to its *Star Wars* and *Batman/Predator II* series. It jumped ahead to fifth place, leaving Valiant at sixth. Marvel and DC's shares rose slightly (0.13 and 0.07, respectively), which means a slightly higher number of these company's products were purchased compared to September. While Malibu stayed fairly steady, Image dropped almost one percentage point, but remains in third place.

'94, included the two getcher-major-development-right-here installments of the "Fatal Attractions" X-crossover storyline: *X-Men* #25 and *Wolverine* #75. These two books, which dealt with Wolvie's de-adamantiumization and Magneto's "vegetization," rivaled *Fantastic Four* #381—where we "lost" Reed Richards and Doc Doom—for getting readers gasping and collectors' hearts beating. (Remember all that excitement?) Rounding out the carry-over Marvels lighting up early '94 cash registers were the early issues in *Daredevil*'s "Fall from Grace" epic, #319 and #320.

By mid-year, the X-Men were in control, with *X-Men* (vol. 2) #30—the sentimental "hitch without a hitch" wedding issue—leading the way. While that book reached a $5 value by June, *Gambit* #1 was another hot card to play at $7. *Marvels* #0 was a fairly strong seller, but nowhere near as powerful as the four original *Marvels* issues, which steadily increased in value up to around July, with #1 peaking at $15.

Then came Clonemania: Peter Parker's clone—who was "born" almost 20 years ago—came back to town, disrupting our worn-out wall-crawler's life (already damaged by his "My parents are robots" crisis) and setting off a few explosions in the market. Starting this summer, a triplet of Modern Age Spidey issues (more on those later) became the must-have on Joe Collector's list, while every clone appearance in recent issues like *Web of Spider-Man* #114 and #115 was eagerly scooped up from store shelves.

Just as the two Spider-dudes were re-introduced to each other in *Web* #117, the world was introduced to a new teen team full of mutant members, Generation X. Whether it was a case of Marvel not being satisfied with its monthly X-income, or an honest attempt to satisfy the hordes of X-Maniacs, this new group was formed, marketed, and welcomed faster than Jubilee could empty a charge account. The late summer's X-epic, "Phalanx Covenant," was the selling—uh, setting for the new mutants' intro; each issue, especially the X-Men vs. Phalanx in *Cable* #16, took over the market in something of a sales virus. Great expectations for *Generation X* #1 were realized in September, and Marvel's deluxe X-book promotion succeeded in selling more books, seeing if readers are willing to pay for better quality paper two weeks sooner than the less expensive regular version, and delighting retailers with every extra 45 cents plunked down. And the X-fandom moves on, as we move onto...

Peter Parker's clone came back to town, disrupting our worn-out wall-crawler's life and setting off a few explosions in the market.

WIZARD'S TOP TEN HOTTEST ARTISTS

PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

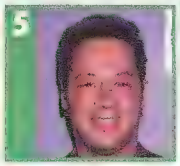
1 **Todd McFarlane**
Spawn

2 **Stephen Platt**
Prophet

PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

3 **Frank Miller**
Sin City: The Big Fat Kill

4 **Greg Capullo**
Angela

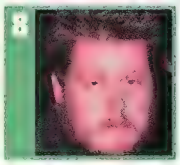


5 **Joe Quesada**
Ash

PHOTO: J. SCHUYLER

6 **Andy Kubert**
X-Men

7 **Whilce Portacio**
WetWorks



8 **Adam Hughes**
Ghost

PHOTO: J. SCHUYLER

9 **Adam Kubert**
Wolverine

PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

10 **Jeff Smith**
Bone

WIZARD'S TOP TEN HOTTEST WRITERS

PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

1 **Frank Miller**
Sin City: The Big Fat Kill

2 **Peter David**
Hulk, Aquaman, Spider-Man 2099

PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

3 **Neil Gaiman**
Sandman, Angela

4 **John Byrne**
Next Men, upcoming: Torch of Liberty Special

PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

5 **Jeff Smith**
Bone

6 **Chris Claremont**
Aliens vs. Predator: D.O.S., Cyberforce, upcoming Sovereign 7

7 **Ron Marz**
Green Lantern

PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

8 **Fabian Nicieza**
X-Men, X-Force

PHOTO: J. SCHUYLER

9 **Scott Lobdell**
Uncanny X-Men, Generation X

PHOTO: J. SCHUYLER

10 **John Ostrander**
The Spectre, Eternal Warrior

WIZARD'S TOP TEN HOTTEST ARTISTS AND WRITERS LISTS ARE DERIVED FROM A NATIONWIDE DEALER SURVEY.

DC: YOUR TICKET TO BIG EVENTS

Those collectors searching for The Big Story may ask this question: Where could you find the most true events this year? As tears were shed for the demise of Marvel's Moon Knight (actually, for the end of his artist's run) early this year, buckets could have been filled in comic stores across the country, when always-heroic Hal Jordan went insane and blasted most of his Corps and all the Guardians into their own "blackest night." Just after *Green Lantern* #46, the "Reign of the Supermen" crossover, caught people off-guard and started soaring in value, *GL* #48-#50, the "Emerald Twilight" books, started flooding cash drawers with green, green, and more green. Like Hal Jordan, DC just wouldn't let up after this mini-epic; new GL Kyle Rayner's adventures from #51 on were fan-pleasing enough to keep his title hot, and it's still way up there in popularity 'n' sales. With *GL*, DC proved that the world is ready for a new man of the hour; will Pierce Brosnan's agent be able to work such wonders?

DC moved along the year with its "KnightsEnd" epic, which gave its readers exactly the ride they wanted—an excellent set of "back to school with Lady Shiva" stories that gradually eased Bruce back into the Batsuit, a much-clamored-for reintroduction of Nightwing into the Batmythos, and even some amazin' Azrael adventures. Unfortunately, it appears that readers should have unbuckled themselves when Part 9—with the well-done Grayson-Valley bout in *Detective* #677—hit the stands, and jumped off before the conclusion in *Legends of the Dark Knight* #63 brought 'em to a disappointing roadblock that even the stars of the film *Speed* couldn't plow through. Although the readers wanted a *bit* more than a heartfelt-pat-on-the-shoulder-you're-forgiven-you-poor-pathetic-psycho ending to the AzBats situation, these two books, and the crossover duo of *Robin* #8 and *Catwoman* #12, saw considerable value gains.

This summer's huge—*enormous*—DC event, *Zero Hour*, was the talk of the industry months before it even happened, and hey, it still is. In an effort to undo most of the mess and entanglements that evolved in its continuity since 1985's *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, the company produced a five-issue crossover mini-series that brought all of its characters together against a force destroying time. Heavily bought books in the "Zero Hour" mini-era

Market WATCHERS

Dear Wizard,

I'm looking for the first *Mask* comic series by Dark Horse, but I can't find it in any store. Do you have any ideas on where I could find the issues?

Brad Hester
Dothan, AL

I suggest the various mail-order companies which print ads in today's comics (and this mag, too!). Even if the *Mask* series isn't listed in an ad, you should contact a few of these retailers for a price list. If you find the dreaded shipping and handling cost to be too high, order with a friend or three and share the fee. And don't forget—you'd better shop around!

Dear Wizard,

I came across two sets of the platinum editions of *Star Wars: Dark Empire*. I sold one, and still have one. I wanted to know: how much are these platinum editions worth?

Brad Reinke
Ft. Lewis, WA

The values have been listed in the Guide since issue #37; go crazy! (And keep that valuable set for a long while, unless you're short on funds—interest in the second series may breathe even more life into the first!)

Dear Market Watcher Marc,

I'd like to know if other publishers will start trying to increase sales of old comic publications the way Marvel has done with the Spidey clone. You know, reintroducing old characters in hopes of bigger sales for earlier issues? (Not that that was Marvel's original intent.) What do you think?

John Kononowech
Lincoln Park, MI

As you stated, John, companies generally don't plan reintroductions of old favorites in order to produce interest in those bygone books. Yes, it still appears that many—but not all, thankfully—publishers are out for that dollar, but the only true income they would receive through character revivals would be from reprints of the character's original books. Marvel has published Milestone Edition reprints of a few Silver Age books that connect to today's hot stories, but in this publisher's case, I believe it just wanted the Silver Age *fans* to come back to ol' Spidey. Same thing applied to *Sandman* #54, in which Neil Gaiman and Mike Allred delighted fans of that '70s icon Prez, by bringing him back one last time. I believe most of today's publishers, especially the pro-entertainment ones, will definitely search for interesting, original ways to bring back some well-loved comic creations.

Dear Market Watchers,

I have thought of a solution to this polybag problem. Why don't they put Ziploc™ seals on them? This would allow collectors to take out the comic and whatever else comes with it, so they could enjoy it. They should also list, on a label on the bag, what it comes with, to make sure no one steals anything from it. This would solve pretty much all the problems with polybags.

Brad Ingraham
Athens, OH

Well, Brad (another Brad?), this is a viable suggestion, but I doubt most publishers would be agreeable. The main problem "Ziploc-ing" a bag would cause is the rise in the number of thefts of such a book's extras—a label wouldn't stop any loser to temptation from swiping a cool card or two. Also, the question of how to tell if the bag was opened would come up; if the particular company manufactured a bag that indicated this through different colors of some sort, it would basically defeat your initial purpose. So, there's presently as much chance of our seeing a comic released in a Ziploc™ bag as finding a lyric booklet in an R.E.M. disc.

Continued thataway

Dear Wizard,

I am sick of the people who think that if a comic comes in a polybag and they open it, it will affect the value. The real value is if you read it and like it. I'm also sick of comic companies that charge $1.50 or more for a little piece of foil that I think is completely useless. Look at the top 100 in *Wizard* #38: number 2 was the X-Men #36 special edition; the regular version wasn't even on the chart. I haven't even found one version of a "Phalanx Covenant" issue without the foil. Don't blame the comic companies fully; mostly, but not fully. Blame the STUPID people who buy it when they have a choice. To get to the point, look at what I'm talking about—comic BOOKS!

Brian Eriksson
Milwaukee, WI

All right, now put the gun down, Brian. Seriously, I understand what you're saying, but there are a few factors involved, none of which necessarily involve stupidity: market pressure, where collectors are told that polybagged and gimmick-plastered books are worth more; peer pressure, where people see others buying this stuff and feel they should join the crowd; and emotional pressure, where fans see a better-looking copy of a certain book, and believe they'll regret purchasing the "less special" edition. Unfortunately, the comic-buying world will probably stay this way for a while, especially with all the companies still bagging their books with megaimportant cards, and plastering that funky foil everywhere. As writer Jo Duffy once said, "It's a bandwagon with four broken wheels." Personally, I—and many others—feel that a comic's one gimmick should be a good story. Books like *FF* #387, *Legion* #54, and most of the recent Spidey books all had fairly good stories, but the absolute worst, most unnecessary gimmick covers of the year. Now, here's someone who brings up an interesting point:

Dear Market Watchers,

I am very pleased about the introduction of Marvel's collector's edition versions of the various X-books. I plan on buying these editions, not because of any potential collectability, but because I like the higher quality of paper and colors. It makes for, in my opinion, a more enjoyable read. Other so-called collector friends of mine say that the regular editions will eventually be worth more in the comic market. Since the demand is not as high for the regular editions, comic shops will offer fewer copies to the public, and this will make them harder to find in the future. Which one do you think will be worth more in the future—the regular or collector's edition? And on a related note, which issue will Marvel subscribers receive each month?

Carrie Lindsey Stone
Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, OH

Good questions, Carrie. As to your first, the collector's edition should beat out the regular in market value—that's the way it has been for years, as the collector's edition is always seen as the main edition. Secondly, according to the Marvel subscription department, all subscribers will receive the deluxe versions of the X-books (*and* Avengers and FF books, etc.—every mainstream Marvel title will soon be doing the two-version thing). Thanks, Carrie, and best o' luck at college.

That's about it, people! I'm gonna go start walking around the office saying the name "Kononowech" (Thanks, John!)—Happy Holidays, y'all!
—Marc Wilkofsky
Clark Kent Clone*

*The production staff is resisting tremendous temptation to comment on *this* one!

included the crossovers *Flash* #94, *Hawkman* #13, all the Legion books, and the following #0 releases: the Batman and Superman books, *Flash*, *GL*, *Robin* (where Dick Grayson finally dons the Batduds), and *Wonder Woman* (a fairly low-ordered issue). Changes in characters' histories have been running rampant since the successful *ZH* mini; it's quickly become apparent that not too many major events happened *within* the series, because the ramifications currently taking place in DC's mainstream titles are where the important-story seekers have to go. These include the replacement (and death?) of Flash in his gettin'-hotter book, and the intro to Wonder Woman's successor in hers.

Were there any other notable DC events this year? Vertigo holds the answer: from day one of 1994, "The Kindly Ones," the recent—and final—major *Sandman* storyline has been capturing more and more dreamers' minds in the nation's comic shops. Easily Vertigo's best-selling title, *Sandman* is comics' closest answer to this year's blockbuster *Forrest Gump*; proof that intelligent, involving, well-written stories with engaging characters can become major hits. If "Life is lak a box of choclits," this series is the type of mind candy that deserves to be relished.

AND THEN THERE'S...

The Big Products from the rest of the publishers comprising the Big Six. Malibu had *Prime* in its Ultraverse imprint, *Deep Space Nine* under its licensed segment, and *Power & Glory* from the fairly successful Bravura (with *Dreadstar* right behind *P & G*)—all impressive products. Malibu's "Hostile Takeover" crossover epic did well, also, and any appearance by hot bad guy Lord Pumpkin—such as his first in *Sludge* #3—is a book to grab.

Valiant scored with its "Chaos Effect" mega-adventure, *X-O Manowar*, and its high-quality yearbooks. *The Visitor* looks promising, as well. After a solid year, this company seems poised to knock readers' socks off in '95, and collectors will be waiting to see which books will do the job.

And Dark Horse lived up to its name with some dynamite sleeper titles: Frank Miller's incredible *Sin City: A Dame to Kill For*, Michael Allred's hilariously entertaining *Madman Comics*, the numerous *Star Wars* books, and, of course, *The Mask* movie adaptation head up the DH hot list. Mark our words—Dark Horse is the one to watch in '95...

AND THERE'S ALSO...

A few newer successful publishers that are outside the aforementioned six which include: Jeff Smith's Cartoon Books—market watchers know how *Bone* has been a powerhouse in both the entertainment field and collector's market; Colleen Doran's Aria Press, which currently publishes *A Distant Soil* and other books that give new meaning to the word quality; Everette Hartsoe's London Night Studios, a publisher—of, most notably, *Razor*—that is on the move, gradually amassing the power to shape itself into exactly what today's readers want; Brian Pulido's Chaos! Comics, a company that knows precisely how to produce and market its books, and keep its readers satisfied, yet thirsting for more; William Tucci's Crusade, a new, but ready-for-success company with strong production and entertainment values; and Harris, a constantly growing, improving company that, in its past few years, has just begun to demonstrate its potential.

These last three companies bring us to the question: what was the Trend of the Year for Recent Comics? Not the high-

This year, each major company had at least one Modern Age book that kicked the market in its pants.

tech gimmick covers—people were definitely tiring of those. Major revamps of longtime characters seemed to be big, but only for a while. Which trend was the longest-running, and most productive? Those Bad Girls, of course! Chaos!'s morbid madame Lady Death, Crusade's skilled slicer Shi, and Harris's blood-lovin' Vampirella (who started it all in '92, with the company's first series) gave the market some new (and much-needed) stimulation, and brightened the eyes, hearts, and minds of thousands of fans (both new and old), and taught collectors and industry bigwigs that well-produced books starring dynamic women *do* sell, *do* thrill, and *do* even take a bite of the "standard" superhero market. Joining the Bad Trio throughout the year were other tough-but-cool female characters, including Lady Rawhide (who first appeared in Topps's hot *Zorro* #3), Catwoman (some would say the original bad girl, and definitely the most recognizable), and Circe (the Wonder Woman foe who was recently injected with hipness in the surprise market hits *WW* #88 and #89). There are sure to be more where these six came from, as long as there are talented creators at the helm.

A BIT O' MODERN AGE EXCITEMENT (1970-1990)

So, what about the Modern Age books? This year, each major company had at least one Modern Age book that kicked the market in its pants. DC, of course, had the early issues of *Sandman*—especially #1, #8 (that ol' first Death), and #22 (young Daniel's debut—he could be Morpheus's replacement). While the Vertigo series is yards away from most others on the field, DC's *Crisis on Infinite Earths* series also held the Upward Movement ball for a while late this summer, thanks to its present counterpart, *Zero Hour*.

This summer, the first original Spider-Clone saga in *Amazing Spider-Man* #149-#151 dashed out in front of every other Marvel comic in the Modern Age Race '94, and held its position. *Uncanny X-Men* #266—which gave the waiting world that Gambit guy—and early Wolverine appearances, like his 1982 mini-series, have been steady runners this year, as well.

Modern Age collectors made it a point to grab a few editions of the original *Vampirella* series from Warren Publications, and any TV and movie tie-ins—like *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, and *Dark Shadows* books—especially with those cool photo covers.

POPULAR SILVER AGE BOOKS (1955-1970)

What were the big trends in the Silver Age market during 1994? The focus on key books (a key book is one with a first appearance or origin of an important character) was one of the biggest trends of '94. Did everyone wake up one morning and collectively decide to fill in the missing keys in their collections? Back in the old days, Silver Age issues of a title, like *Amazing Spider-Man*, were moving upward *en masse*. The keys moved up at about the same rate as the non-keys. But during '94, collectors suddenly wanted only the keys, passing up the non-key issues of their favorite title. So, while prices for key books continued to move up, prices for non-keys leveled off.

Even with the upward price movement during the year, the market for high-grade keys still looks to have legs, so pick them up now, because they ain't getting any cheaper.

Another trend was the abandonment of the mid-grade. Books in the Very Good to Fine range—even keys—were not selling at the same pace as the extreme high grades (Very Fine or better) or the low grades (Good). In some cases, mid-grade books were not selling at all, even when discounted below price guide prices. Watch for prices on books in the Very Good-to-Fine range to fall during '95. You heard it here first.

Marvel's "most wanted" Silver Age keys during the year were *Amazing Fantasy* #15, Spider-Man's first appearance; *Amazing Spider-Man* #1; *Fantastic Four* #5, Dr. Doom's first appearance; *X-Men* #1; *Fantastic Four* #48, the Silver Surfer and Galactus's first appearance; *Incredible Hulk* #1, The Hulk's first appearance; and *Fantastic Four* #1. But those weren't the only books with heat. Pre-code horror and war titles from Marvel (when the company was called Atlas) were hot, especially *Journey into Mystery*, *Strange Tales*, *Tales to Astonish*, and *Tales of Suspense*. Just about as hot were the so-called prototype (or "try-out") issues from these titles, like *Strange Tales* #97, the prototype issue for characters similar to Aunt May and Uncle Ben. Minor keys, like *Amazing Spider-Man* #14 (first Green Goblin), #28 (first Molten Man), and #50 (first Kingpin), were on the move as well.

There was strong demand for "good girl art" comics like *Phantom Lady* and *Crimes by Women*, and renewed interest in comics published by EC.

Some record-breaking prices were achieved during '94, including $125,000 for a copy of *Detective Comics* #27 (first appearance of Batman).

Top Silver Age artists and writers for Marvel in '94 were Steve Ditko (hottest of the bunch at year's end), Jack Kirby (the King's fans are legion), Barry Windsor-Smith (back before he added the "Windsor"), Jim Steranko, and Stan Lee.

Many noteworthy Marvel sales were reported to Price Guide headquarters during '94, including:

Amazing Fantasy #15 in VF/NM condition for $22,500, well above the price guide price, but well worth it considering the demand for this book and the rarity of the grade.

Amazing Spider-Man #1 in VF+ condition for $11,000.

Daredevil #1 in NM for $1,850, again above guide, but this has been the story for all high-grade keys all year long.

Fantastic Four #48 in NM+ condition for $1,000—a very strong price due to the extreme scarcity of the book in NM condition.

The market for Silver Age DCs was equally strong during '94. The same trends that applied to Marvels were at work for DCs. Key books in high grade were setting record prices all year long, while low-grade books required heavy discounts in order to sell. These facts, as stated before, signal a wider price spread between the Near Mints and the Very Goods in '95.

Some of the hot DC artists of the Silver Age during '94 were Neal Adams, especially his '60s *Detective Comics* and *Strange Adventures* issues, Berni Wrightson, Carmine Infantino, and Alex Toth.

Sales of DC Silver were brisk during the year. Here are some examples of reported sales:

Brave and the Bold #34 in Near Mint condition for $1,500 (first Hawkman appearance).

Detective #225 in Very Fine condition for $3,300 (first appearance of Martian Manhunter).

Hawkman #1 in Near Mint condition for $300.

House of Secrets #92 in Near Mint/Mint condition for $750, a record price due to the exceptionally high grade (first appearance of the Swamp Thing).

There was plenty of action outside the Marvel/DC Silver Age market. Early Warren Publications magazines (*Creepy*, *Eerie*, and especially *Vampirella*) were some of the best-selling Silver Age books during the middle part of '94, possibly because of the recent interest in those wild "Bad Girl" comics.

Charlton publications with artwork by Steve Ditko caught fire during the year, and were some of the most-requested issues at the San Diego Con. Some of the Ditko books to keep your eyes on are *Space Adventures* #10, #11, and #12 (classic cover), *Space Adventures* #33 (Ditko's origin and first appearance of Captain Atom), *The Thing* #s 12-17, *Return of Gorgo* #2 and #3 (these two issues have the added plus of being movie tie-ins), and even the '60s series of *Space Adventures*.

Magnus, Turok, and *Doctor Solar* from Gold Key continued to move during the year, although not at the same frenzied pace that they did at the peak of the Valiant boom. Other Gold Key publications that were hot during '94 were almost all of the TV tie-in series with photo covers. The leader of this pack, of course, is *Star Trek*—especially the first nine issues, which had great photo covers of the TV cast. The one-shot movie special titled *Santa Claus Conquers the Martians* looks to be a sleeper. It has a real cult following and is tough to find. All these books appeal to a wider audience than just comics fans, which is part of the reason for their popularity.

Speaking of wider audiences, the huge success of the Cartoon Channel on cable TV has created a massive demand for anything (toys, cards, comics, games, etc.) having to do with cartoon characters both old and new. Hanna-Barbera characters seemed to be the most popular during '94, but who knows what will happen in '95—maybe old Looney Tunes comics will be all the rage. Some of the most valuable (and therefore most sought-after by hard-core collectors) of the HB titles are *Jonny Quest*, *Space Ghost*, and *The Jetsons*. More affordable (but still cool) are titles such as *The Flintstones*, *Yogi Bear*, and *Huckleberry Hound*. But don't count out *Deputy Dawg* or *Quick-Draw McGraw*—our pick for sleepers of '95.

THE GOLDEN AGE MARKET (1935-1954)

So, can we pin down the Golden Age market trends during this past year? Sure—looking at this market, it's obvious that some of the trends were upward movement in books featured in Fredric Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent*; strong demand for "good girl art" comics like *Phantom Lady*, *Crimes by Women*, and the like; renewed interest in comics published by EC; a huge demand for Timely Comics such as *Marvel Mystery*, *Captain America Comics*, and *Sub-Mariner*; record prices for comics from the legendary Mile High collection; and a surge in demand for *Captain Marvel Adventures* and other comics by Fawcett Publications.

Of the above, the strongest demand late in the year was for comics published by Timely Publications—the predecessor of today's Marvel Comics. Many of Marvel's top stars of today, including Captain America and Namor, The Sub-Mariner, were originally introduced back in the Decade of Gold: 1940-49. Titles published by Timely included *Captain America Comics*, *Marvel Mystery*, *Daring Mystery*, *Human Torch*, and *Sub-Mariner*. When you look at the current market values for some of these issues

compared to prices for some of Marvel's Silver Age keys from the '60s, it's obvious that the Golden Age titles are undervalued in relation to the Silver Age. When rare and highly sought-after issues like *Human Torch* #2 and *Sub-Mariner* #1 are half the price of an *Amazing Spider-Man* #1 or *Fantastic Four* #1, it's time for a market correction. Watch for books like *Subby* #1 and *Human Torch* #1 and #2 to make a strong move up in '95.

Some of the hot Golden Age artists and writers during the past year were Jack Kirby (primarily those issues where he teamed up with Joe Simon), Lou Fine (whose classic work on *Fantastic* #3 and *Hit* #5 make them among the most sought-after books from the Golden Age), Carl Barks (ducks are back!), and Will Eisner (try finding a copy of *Wow What A Comic* #1, his first work in comics).

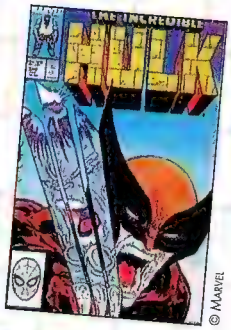
Some record-breaking prices were achieved during '94, including $125,000 for a copy of *Detective Comics* #27 (first appearance of Batman). This price is currently the highest price paid for a comic book, and is shared by a few books. But a recent sale of the Mile High copy of *More Fun Comics* #52 (first appearance of The Spectre) for the same amount of money makes us wonder what the Mile High *Superman* #1 or *Action* #1 would bring these days. Other record sales include the Mile High copy of *All Star Comics* #3 (first appearance of the Justice Society Of America) for $90,000 and the Mile High copy of *Adventure Comics* #40 (beginning the Sandman series) for $80,000. Notice something about these sales? They're all DCs! Where's the Mile High *Red Raven* #1? Or the Mile High *Sub-Mariner* #1? Look for some record-breaking sales of Timely Publications books in '95.

Looking back over the year, what one word summed up the Golden Age market in '94, and all the markets, in fact? It was—as Stanley Ipkiss said in *The Mask*—SMOKIN'! ☆

Jon Warren and Marc Wilkofsky are two comic book aficionados that can change the course of mighty rivers, and bend steel in their bare hands.

WiN!

Incredible Hulk #340!!



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Missing Link

Here's your latest quest, Link Finders! Each month, we list three comic book issues that contain something in common: in content, characters, creators, or the like. Your job is to tell us what that something is.

For example, what do *Uncanny X-Men* #144, *Marvel Team-Up* #122, and *She-Hulk* (vol. 2) #8 all have in common? That's easy: all three feature guest appearances by the Man-Thing.

Get the idea? Of course, we won't make each contest *that* easy. You'll *definitely* have to ***read*** the three issues to find the answers, but hey, how hard could that be for you comic lovers? By the way, you won't have to be a regular reader of the particular titles to figure out the answer.

We'll randomly select an entry out of all the correct ones we receive. The winner of this month's contest will receive that awesome Wolverine vs. Hulk rematch in *Incredible Hulk #340*! So good luck, and good sleuthing!

Here are this month's batch o' books:

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Eternal Warrior #12

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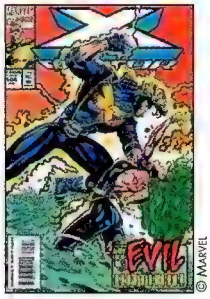
H.A.R.D. Corps #23



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X-Factor #104

Send all entries to:
Missing Link #41
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920-2064
Hurry! All entries must be received by January 27, 1995!

CONGRATULATIONS to Patrick Wick, of APO AP 96664-2014 (it's a military address, folks)! He figured out issue #37's Missing Link: *The Infinity Gauntlet* #1, *Legion* (vol. 3) #38, and *Rai and the Future Force* #20 all featured characters wearing purple robes! Congrats, Patrick!

If you can read this fine print, then you're in.

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, their immediate families, and any "fan" who buys comics for profit instead of reading enjoyment. Go take a long walk off a short pier, buddy! Print your name, age, address, city, state, zip code, telephone number with area code, and the Missing Link on a three-by-five-inch index card or a standard postcard. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry to Missing Link #41, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064. Limit one entry per envelope. No mechanical reproductions will be accepted. All entries become the property of Wizard Press, and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state, and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winner. No cash equivalent or substitute prize is offered. The prize will be awarded in the name of the contest winner and is not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated, or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purpose and rules hereof. I try to think about Elvis, Memphis, the Creature from the Black Lagoon. I try to think about Shakespeare, Leap Year, Oprah in the afternoon. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by January 27, 1995.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. The prize winner will be selected in a random drawing from all properly completed entry forms received at contest headquarters. The random drawing will be conducted on January 30, 1995, by Wizard Press. All decisions are final.

For the name of the winner, available after February 20, 1995, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Missing Link #41 Winner, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064, or just watch this column!

1994—A Strange Year

by Todd McFarlane

This column comes near the tail end of 1994, which was, once again, a strange year, albeit in a different way from 1993. 1993 had the advent of the speculators, the glut, the crash of the market, and the big events going on with both Superman and Batman, bringing national attention to comic books. 1994 was more of a period of settling down. The industry is still trying to settle down and find out exactly where everyone's going to land from a publishing, distributing, and retailing perspective. We've managed to keep our hard-core base of fans around, which is quite a feat, considering how the industry could have lost them with last year's glut.

From my point of view, the events that shaped 1994 were not so much based upon comic books, but based upon the characters in the comics themselves. What we had were spin-offs of characters into other arenas, some in the mass market and some in the diversification of product that publishers sell within the direct market. Retailers are currently more conservative, because they are unsure of what's going to sell, and being conservative is the route to take right now. Also, diversification is another key direction that publishers seem to be going in to insure that if the industry goes toward an upward or downward swing, we don't have to go on a roller coaster ride as quickly.

There were a lot of things happening on the other side of comics this year, namely in films and toys. First off, we saw *The Crow*, based upon James O'Barr's haunting comic, which wasn't a mega-blockbuster, yet it had a flair and a style that set it apart from other film adaptations of comic book characters. The film also brought attention and notoriety to independent and small press comic books, which is good for the entire industry.

There was also, of course, *The Mask*, based upon the Dark Horse Comics character and comic books, which was a huge runaway success. Domestically, it made over $100 million, even though it was made with about a $17 million budget. *The Mask* led to spin-off merchandising, which widened its appeal, and brought more attention to comics.

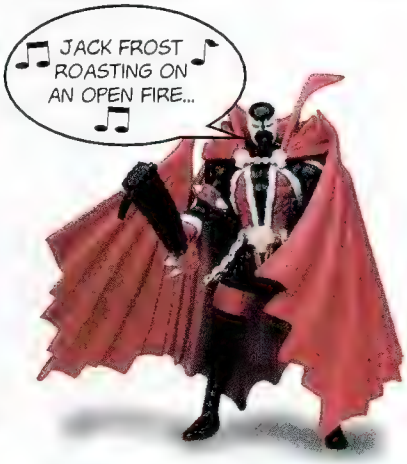
Jim Lee's *WildC.A.T.s* animated series made its debut on CBS affiliates this past fall. *The Tick* cartoon, based on American Entertainment's cheese doodle-eating character, also debuted in the fall. *The Marvel Action Hour*, featuring the Fantastic Four and Iron Man, was another fall debut. In sum, we saw the debut of four half-hours of comic book-related series that introduced comics in another arena, to a whole new audience.

I'm not saying that these movies and shows have any direct link to increasing sales. I'm saying they give publishers other venues to see their characters in a new light. For fans, the diversification is extremely entertaining. Instead of reading about a character in a comic book, they could see him/her in a movie or animated series, or pick up an action figure or statue, or wear a shirt featuring the character.

The proliferation of toys, Todd Toys included, is starting to get fans excited about comic characters in other ways. Instead of paying six dollars for a graphic novel, a fan might spend the money on an action figure. Toy Biz's X-Men figures have gone over big; Kenner's *Batman: The Animated Series* figures are always big sellers. And, for sure, there will be other action figure lines based on comic book-spawned characters.

So, you see, instead of just licking our wounds from '93 in 1994, and trying to piece things back together, we did all of that, and were able to expand our properties into other venues. With that, the fans—publishers included—could enjoy comics in other media, which in turn reminds us of why we like comics in the first place.

Let's hope that 1995 gives us another strange year like the two that preceded it. Thanks for reading, and Happy Holidays! ☆



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Any industry professional who wishes to respond to the information or opinions stated here should write to: E.G.O., 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064.

*EVERYONE'S GOT OPINIONS

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SHOWS & CONVENTIONS

Welcome to the new *Wizard* Shows & Conventions! To help connect you with the biggest and best comic book shows and conventions in your area, *Wizard* is still printing all the stuff we used to print in this department. But we've added extra space so you can find out in advance about admission discounts, creator appearances, and other superneat stuff!

These listings are as accurate as we can get 'em, but *Wizard* always recommends phoning ahead before you attend an event—show information sometimes changes after we go to press. With that in mind, it's time for all you comic-hungry hordes to go conventioneering!

ALABAMA

DECEMBER 17, HUNTSVILLE

Card, Comic, and Racing Show, Jaycee Community Bldg., Old Airport Rd., 35 tables @ $30 each, $1.50 admission, 9am-4pm. Contact: Linda Pogue @ 615-962-2354 days, 615-469-7227 nights.

CALIFORNIA

NOVEMBER 27, ONTARIO

Inland Empire Comic Book Convention, Red Lion Hotel, 60 tables @ $55 each, $4 admission, 10am-5pm. Guests: John Estes (*Tales to Astonish*), James Robinson (*Starman, Tales of Suspense, The Golden Age, Witchcraft*). Contact: Myke or Ken @ 909-425-3199.

TUESDAYS, FRIDAYS, SATURDAYS, SUNDAYS THROUGHOUT DECEMBER, WHITTIER

Cardtown USA, 12327 Whittier Blvd. at the corner of Penn St., two miles east of the 605 Freeway, free admission, Tuesdays & Fridays 5-9:30pm, Saturdays & Sundays 10am-5pm. Tuesdays: free wax packs (one per person), Fridays: $100 show money members drawing, Saturdays: Members drawing, Sundays: Hourly door prizes. Always free parking, occasional guest appearances. Contact: Roger Sparling @ 310-693-1978.

DECEMBER 4, PALO ALTO

Super Comic/Toy Expo, Hyatt Rickeys, 4219 El Camino Real (North of San Antonio Rd.), 30 tables @ $65 each, $4 admission, 10am-4pm. Spectacular door prizes throughout the hour, including autographed Image items; amateur drawing contest; trivia competition; rare Power Ranger toys; free grab bags. Contact: Bill Lee @ 415-333-8100.

DECEMBER 10, SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco Sports Card & Comic Book Show, Cathedral Hill Hotel, 1101 Van Ness Ave. @ Geary Blvd., 50 tables @ $50 each, $2 admission, 10am-4pm. Guest: call for info. Contact: Al Jang or Damon Jang @ 415-386-9036.

DECEMBER 11, SAN JOSE

San Jose Sports Card & Comic Book Show, Lebaron Hotel, 1350 North First Street, 35 tables @ $50 each, $2 admission, 10am-4pm. Contact: Al Jang or Damon Jang @ 415-386-9036.

DECEMBER 11, SAN JOSE/MILPITAS

Super Comic/Toy Expo, Napredak Hall, 770 Montague Expressway (near the Great Mall), 50 tables @ $65 each, $4 admission, 10am-4pm. Spectacular door prizes throughout the hour including autographed Image items; amateur drawing contest; trivia competition; rare Power Ranger Toys; free grab bags. Contact: Bill Lee @ 415-333-8100.

DECEMBER 18, ONTARIO

Inland Empire Comic Book Convention, Red Lion Hotel, 60 tables @ $55 each, $4 admission, 10am-5pm. Special guest TBA; call for more info. Contact: Myke or Ken @ 909-425-3199.

DECEMBER 18, SAN FRANCISCO

Super Comic/Toy Expo, Fort Mason Center, Bldg. A, Buchanan & Marina Streets (near Crissy Fields), 30 tables @ $65 each, $4 admission, 10am-4pm. Win: Original Image artwork; spectacular door prizes throughout the day, including autographed Image items; amateur drawing contest; trivia competition; rare Power Ranger toys; free grab bags. Contact: Bill Lee @ 415-333-8100.

DECEMBER 18, SAN MATEO

San Mateo Sports Card & Comic Book Show, Dynfey Hotel, 1770 South Amphlett Blvd. (Hwy 92 @ Hwy 101), 35 tables @ $50 each, $2 admission, 10am-4pm. Contact: Al Jang or Damon Jang @ 415-386-9036.

FEBRUARY 24-26, 1995, SAN FRANCISCO

Super Comic/Toy Expo, Cow Palace, Geneva Ave. & Santos, 150 tables (call for info on cost per table), admission: TBA, Friday noon-7:00pm, Saturday & Sunday 10am-6pm. Guests: Whilce Portacio and other creators from Image. Special charity auction for the Polly Klaas Foundation for Missing Children. Call for further details. This event was rescheduled from January 13-15, 1995 at the Oakland Convention Center. Contact: Bill Lee @ 415-333-8100.

DELAWARE

DECEMBER 4, DOVER

Super Con, Holiday Inn, Rt. 13 South, 30 tables @ $60 each, $3 admission ($1.00 off with this *Wizard* ad), 10am-4pm. Auction 4-4:30pm. Guests: Robb Horan (*Safety Belt Man*) and Dark One (*Animal Mystic*, from Sirius). An art contest will be held, plus over $1,000 worth of door prizes will be given away throughout the day. Contact: Derek Woywood @ 609-782-0817.

FLORIDA

DECEMBER 11, ORLANDO

Comic Book Mega Show VI, Marriott hotel, 8001 International Dr., 60 tables @ $50 each, $3 admission, 10am-5pm. Gold Edition comic book door prizes. Thousands of Golden Age, Silver Age, and Modern Age comics. Special signer to be announced. Contact: James Breitbeil for more info @ 407-426-7745.

GEORGIA

DECEMBER 2-4, LILBURN/ATLANTA

P.T. Shows Cards and Collectibles Show, Lilburn Crossing Shopping Center at Hwy. 29 & Beaver Ruin Rd., 70 tables @ $65 each, $1 admission daily (children under 6 free), Fri. 4pm-9pm, Sat. 10am-7pm, Sun. 11am-6pm. Contact: David Bradford or Charles Dozetos @ 800-251-5150, or locally, 923-5557.

DECEMBER 9-11, LILBURN/ATLANTA

P.T. Shows Cards and Collectibles Show, Lilburn Crossing Shopping Center at Hwy. 29 & Beaver Ruin Rd., 70 tables @ $65 each, $1 admission daily (children under 6 free), Fri. 4pm-9pm, Sat. 10am-7pm, Sun. 11am-6pm. Contact: David Bradford or Charles Dozetos @ 800-251-5150, or locally, 923-5557.

DECEMBER 16-18, LILBURN/ATLANTA

P.T. Shows Cards and Collectibles Show, Lilburn Crossing Shopping Center at Hwy. 29 & Beaver Ruin Rd., 70 tables @ $65 each, $1 admission daily (children under 6 free), Fri. 4pm-9pm, Sat. 10am-7pm, Sun. 11am-6pm. Contact: David Bradford or Charles Dozetos @ 800-251-5150, or locally, 923-5557.

DECEMBER 23, 24, LILBURN/ATLANTA

P.T. Shows Cards and Collectibles Show, Lilburn Crossing Shopping Center at Hwy. 29 & Beaver Ruin Rd., 70 tables @ $65 each, $1 admission daily (children under 6 free), Fri. 11am-9pm, Sat. 10am-5pm. Contact: David Bradford or Charles Dozetos @ 800-251-5150, or locally, 923-5557.

DECEMBER 30, 31, LILBURN/ATLANTA

P.T. Shows Cards and Collectibles Show, Lilburn Cross-

ing Shopping Center at Hwy. 29 & Beaver Ruin Rd., 70 tables @ $65, $1 admission daily (children under 6 free), Fri. 4pm-9pm, Sat. 10am-5pm. Contact: David Bradford or Charles Dozetos @ 800-251-5150, or locally, 923-5557.

MASSACHUSETTS

DECEMBER 11, WOBURN

Comic & Non-Sport Card Show, Ramada Hotel, Exit 35 off of Rt. 128, 35 tables @ $50 each, $2 admission, 11am-5pm. Up to $200 in credit will be raffled off. Contact: Larry Harrison @ 617-596-3336.

DECEMBER 18, NATICK

Comic & Non-Sport Card Show, Holiday Inn Crown Plaza, Rt. 9E off of Rt. 30, 35 tables @ $50 each, $2 admission, 11am-5pm. Up to $200 in credit will be raffled off. Contact: Larry Harrison @ 617-596-3336.

NEW JERSEY

DECEMBER 3, WOODBRIDGE

Comic Book & Comic Art Convention, The Sheraton Hotel, 515 Rt. 1 South, across from the Woodbridge Mall, 40 tables @ $55 each, $3 admission, 10am-4pm. Guests: Tim Hildebrandt (*Marvel Masterpieces '94* card set), Keith Giffen (*Mars Attacks, Lobo,* and *Justice League*), Dwight Zimmerman (editor on *Mars Attacks* and *Zorro*), and Dave Hunt (*The Little Mermaid*). Contact: Ron Jordan @ 908-828-5955.

DECEMBER 4, BORDENTOWN

Comic Book & Comic Art Convention, The Days Inn Hotel, Rt. 206 North (Exit 7 off the NJ Turnpike), 30 tables @ $55 each, $3 admission, 10am-4pm. Guests: Larry Mahlstedt (*Amazing Spider-Man*), Howard Bender (*Spider-Man Magazine*), & Kurt Schaffenberger (*Lois Lane, Superman,* and *Captain Marvel*). Contact: Ron Jordan @ 908-828-5955.

DECEMBER 10-11, CHERRY HILL

Card & Comicon II, National Guard Armory, Haddonfield Rd. & Grove St., 75 tables @ $125 each, $1 admission, 10am-5pm. Guests: Rick Parker (*Beavis & Butt-Head*), Ande Parks (*Catwoman*), Lisa Trusiano (*Barbie* and *Vampire*), Frank Toran (*Punisher*—Sunday only), Dave Hoover (*Captain America*), and Carmen Imperato (*Fantastic Four Unlimited*). First 250 people each day will receive a Lady Death poster compliments of Chaos! Comics. Contact: Greg Petrino @ 215-968-8577.

DECEMBER 17 & 18, BORDENTOWN

Bordentown II, National Guard Armory, Rt. 206 North, 65 tables @ $100 each, $1 admission, 10am-5pm. Contact: Greg Petrino @ 215-968-8577.

NEW YORK

DECEMBER 4, NEW YORK CITY

Comic Book Extravaganza, The Marriott-East, 525 Lexington Ave. and 49th St., 63 tables @ $95 each, $4 admission (under 6 free), 10am-4pm. Fleer is here! That's right. The Fleer Ultra X-Men '95 card set is here. It's the debut of the card series of the year. Sensational guest artists that'll rock your socks off. Previews of Fleer *Skeleton Warriors* and Marvel Flair '95. You've waited all year long. Well, wait no more. Plus, experience the excitement of 3DO. Promos & premiums galore, with the first 50 attendees getting super packages! 50 cents off admission with this *Wizard* ad. Contact: Max Gottfried @ 718-441-9868.

NORTH CAROLINA

DECEMBER 10-11, GREENSBORO

Collectors' Showcase, Greensboro Coliseum, Exit 217B off I-40, High Point Road, 50 tables @ $80 each, $2 admission on weekends, Saturday 9:00am-5:00pm, Sunday 9:00am-4:00pm. Guests: Buzz Setzer (*Catwoman*), Richard Pollard (*Razor*), Terry Collins (*Elfquest*), and Bill Neville (*Elfquest*). Contact: Richard Morgan @ 703-563-1129.

OHIO

DECEMBER 4, HUDSON

Comic Book & Non-Sports Card Show, Hudson Holiday Inn, Route 8 @ Ohio Turnpike, Exit 12, 40 tables @ $40 each, $1 admission (children under 6 free), 10am-4pm. Contact: Steve Weimer @ 216-650-4039.

JANUARY 1, AKRON

Fairlawn Comic Con, I-77 & Rt. 18 (Exit 136), 35 tables @ $45 each or three for $125, $2.00 admission (children 6 and under free), 10am-4pm. Contact: Jeff Harper @ 216-499-6056.

JANUARY 28, HUDSON

Comic Book & Non-Sports Card Show, Hudson Holiday Inn, 40 tables @ $40, $1 admission (children under 6 free), 10am-4pm. Contact: Steve Weimer @ 216-650-4039.

PENNSYLVANIA

DECEMBER 3-4, PITTSBURGH (MONROEVILLE)

Collectible Toy and Comic Show, Pittsburgh Expo Mart, Business Rt. 22, Pa. Turnpike Exit 6 (in front of Monroeville Mall), 490 tables @ $35 each, $4 adult admission ($2 for children 12 and under), $1 off with *Wizard* ad, 10am-4pm. Guests: Mike Kazaleh (*Ren & Stimpy*), Kevin Rasel (*Conjured Image, Cry for Dawn*), and Tom Fry (*Toy Bop* author). Display of *Star Trek* model kits featured. Contact: K. Crispin @ 412-539-8821.

TENNESSEE

DECEMBER 3, CHATTANOOGA

Card, Comic, and Racing Show, Days Inn, I-75 East Ridge Exit, 35 tables @ $45 each, $1.50 admission, 9am-4pm. Contact: Linda Pogue @ 615-962-2354 days, 615-469-7227 nights.

TEXAS

NOVEMBER 26, HOUSTON

Comic Book and Collectibles Show, Ramada Northwest, 12801 Northwest Freeway, 290 at Pinemont, 110 6-foot tables @ $45 each, $3.00 admission (children 12 and under $1.00), 10:30am-5:30pm. Special guests: Don Rosa, William Stout, Sam Kieth (tentative), other guests TBA; free autographs. Door prizes every hour, charity auction 2pm. *Magic: The Gathering,* action figure, and model-building contests. With paid admission and this ad, get three free comics or a Marvel wax pack! Contact: Larry Taylor @ 713-667-8697.

DECEMBER 4, HOUSTON

Card and Comic Convention, Holiday Inn Southwest, 11160 S.W. Frwy at Beltway 8, 35 tables @ $65 each, $2.00 admission, 9am-4pm. Door prize drawings every 30 minutes for comics and cards. Receive a free pack of Marvel cards with this ad and paid admission. Contact: Mark Hlavinka @ 713-293-8676.

DECEMBER 11, HOUSTON

Card and Comic Convention, Holiday Inn Hobby Airport, 9100 Gulf Freeway, I-45 S. (exit College Airport), 40 tables @ $65 each, $2.00 admission, 9am-4pm. Door prize drawings every 30 minutes for comics and cards. Receive a free pack of Marvel cards with this ad and paid admission. Contact: Mark Hlavinka @ 713-293-8676.

DECEMBER 11, LIVE OAK

Bi-monthly Card & Comic Show, Live Oak Civic Center, Pat Booker Rd. (off I-35, near Randolph Airforce Base), 20 tables @ $40 each or 2 @ $70, $1 admission, 10:00am-6:00pm. Door prizes hourly. Contact: Dale Eckman @ 210-945-0003.

DECEMBER 11, BEAUMONT

Card and Comic Convention, Holiday Inn Beaumont Plaza, 3950 I-10 exit Walden, 30 tables @ $45 each or 2 for $85, $1.00 admission, 10am-5pm. Door prize drawings every 30 minutes for comics and cards. Receive a free pack of comic cards with this ad and paid admission. Contact: Mark Hlavinka @ 713-293-8676.

DECEMBER 17, SAN ANTONIO

Card and Comic Convention, Embassy Suites Hotel, 7750 Briaridge, I-10W at 410W (behind Malibu Fun Ctr.), 35 tables @ $55 each or 2 for $100, $1 admission, 9:30am-4pm. Door prize drawings every 30 minutes for comics and cards. Receive a free pack of comic cards with this ad and paid admission. Contact: Mark Hlavinka @ 713-293-8676.

DECEMBER 18, AUSTIN

Card and Comic Convention, Embassy Suites Hotel, 5901 North I-H35, 40 tables @ $55 each or 2 for $100, $1.50 admission, 10am-5pm. Door prize drawings every 30 minutes for comics and cards. Receive a free pack of comic cards with this ad and paid admission. Contact: Mark Hlavinka @ 713-293-8676.

DECEMBER 18, HOUSTON

Card and Comic Convention, Marriott Westside, 13210 Katy Frwy, I-10W, Exit Eldridge, 45 tables @ $65 each, $2.00 admission, 9am-4pm. Door prize drawings every 30 minutes for cards and comics. Receive a free pack of Marvel cards with this ad and paid admission. Contact: Mark Hlavinka @ 713-293-8676.

VIRGINIA

DECEMBER 11, TYSONS CORNER/FALLS CHURCH

Comic Book & Trading Card Show, Tysons Ramada Hotel, 7801 Leesburg Pike (Falls Church), 80 tables @ $65 each, $2 admission, 10am-4pm. Contact: Capital Associates @ 703-503-5834.

WEST VIRGINIA

JANUARY 15, CHARLESTON

West Virginia Comic Con, Holiday Inn, Charleston House, 600 Kanawha Blvd. East, 38 6-foot tables @ $45 each, $2.50 admission (children 6 and under free), 10am-4pm. Contact: Jeff Harper @ 216-499-6056. ☆

If you'd like to use *Wizard*'s magic to help advertise your comic book event, call Karen Evora at (914) 268-3907.

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WIZARD FANSURVEY AND FREE CAPOFFER

1. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU COLLECT:

- animation cels
- comics
- original art
- POGs
- sports memorabilia
- stamps
- statues
- trading cards
- other (specify) _____

2. WHICH ONE OF THE FOLLOWING IS YOUR FAVORITE PUBLISHER:

- Bongo
- Chaos!
- Dark Horse
- DC
- Harris
- Image
- Malibu
- Marvel
- TEKNO•COMIX
- Topps
- Valiant
- Viz
- other (specify) _____

3. IN THE LAST MONTH, HOW MANY PRODUCTS DID YOU PURCHASE FROM EACH OF THE FOLLOWING:

__ Bongo
__ Chaos!
__ Dark Horse
__ DC
__ Harris
__ Image
__ Malibu
__ Marvel
__ TEKNO•COMIX
__ Topps
__ Valiant
__ Viz
__ other (specify) _____

4. HOW DO YOU CHOOSE A COMIC TO BUY? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)

- cover art or enhancements
- friend's recommendation
- retailer's recommendation
- familiar with creative team
- read about it in *Wizard*
- free stuff
- familiar with publisher
- saw advertisement in *Wizard*
- special issue (#1, big event, etc.)
- familiar with the character
- next in the series I'm reading
- other (specify) _____

5. HAVE YOU EVER BEEN BEATEN UP BECAUSE YOU READ COMICS?

- yes
- no

IF YES, DID YOU GET ANY GOOD SHOTS IN?

- yes
- no

6. DO YOUR FRIENDS BUY COMICS ON YOUR RECOMMENDATION?

- yes
- no

7. DO YOUR FRIENDS BUY OTHER PRODUCTS (CLOTHING, MUSIC, SNACKS, ETC.) BASED ON YOUR RECOMMENDATIONS?

- yes
- no

8. WHAT DO YOU SPEND MOST OF YOUR MONEY ON (OTHER THAN COMICS)?

- arcade games/sports equipment
- books
- cards
- clothes/sneakers
- computer programs/games
- home video games
- movies/video rentals
- music (tapes, CDs)
- toys
- other (specify) _____

9. HOW MANY VIDEOS HAVE YOU RENTED IN THE LAST FOUR WEEKS?

_____

10. HOW MANY TAPES AND CDS DID YOU BUY OR RECEIVE AS GIFTS IN THE LAST FOUR WEEKS?

_____

11. WHAT DO YOU THINK IS REALLY INSIDE THOSE STRETCH ARMSTRONG FIGURES?

_____

12. DO YOU OWN A HOME COMPUTER?

- yes
- no

if yes, what type _____

CLIP OR COPY PAGES

13. WHY DO YOU BUY A PARTICULAR ISSUE OF *WIZARD*? (CHOOSE ONE.)

- the cover
- the articles
- the contests
- the free stuff
- I always buy it
- other (specify) _____

14. MARK THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS WITH A T FOR TRUE OR AN F FOR FALSE.

__ I feel like the staff of *Wizard* are my friends.
__ *Wizard* makes me feel like I know the artists/writers, people involved in comics.
__ The price guides are the most important thing about *Wizard*.
__ I buy *Wizard* because of the attitude.
__ I buy *Wizard* because of the articles.
__ I buy *Wizard* because of the free stuff.
__ I buy *Wizard* because of the contests and special offers.
__ I buy things I see advertised in *Wizard*.
__ I buy things based on *Wizard*'s recommendations.

15. HOW MANY OTHER PEOPLE READ YOUR ISSUE OF *WIZARD*?

_____

16. IF YOU COULD PUT THREE *WIZARD* DEPARTMENTS OR COLUMNS IN THE DUMPSTER, NEVER TO BE SEEN AGAIN, WHICH WOULD THEY BE?

_____
_____
_____

17. HOW MANY COMICS DO YOU OWN?

_____

18. IF YOU DON'T SUBSCRIBE TO *WIZARD*, WHAT WOULD MAKE YOU WANT TO SUBSCRIBE:

- free stuff
- guaranteed early delivery
- special price
- other (specify) _____

19. WOULD YOU PAY MORE FOR PREMIUM DELIVERY SERVICE?

- yes
- no

20. WHAT'S THE WEIRDEST PLACE YOU'VE EVER BEEN NAKED?

_____

21. HOW OFTEN DO YOU PURCHASE *WIZARD*?

- every month
- nearly every month
- 2-3 times a year
- never (I'm a cheapo who reads a friend's copy)

22. HOW MANY COMICS HAVE YOU PURCHASED IN THE LAST FOUR WEEKS?

_____

PHOTO: J. SCHUYLER

HI.
I'M CRYSTAL, THE OFFICIAL *WIZARD* SPOKESPERSON AND INTERNATIONAL CRIME CZAR. IF YOU WANT ONE OF THESE KEEN *WIZARD* CAPS*, JUST FILL OUT THIS SURVEY, MAIL IT IN TO THE ADDRESS BELOW, AND IF YOURS IS ONE OF THE FIRST 200 ENTRIES WE RECEIVE, IT'S YOURS! TA-TA.

23. WHAT MAGAZINES DO YOU READ REGULARLY? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

- *Advance*
- *Axcess*
- *Beckett*
- *Bike*
- *Bikini*
- *Buzz*
- *CBG*
- *Collector's Sportslook*
- *Dirt*
- *Disney Adventures*
- *Dragon*
- *Duelist*
- *Entertainment Weekly*
- *Flux*
- *Guitar World*
- *Heavy Metal*
- *Muscle & Fitness*
- *Nickelodeon*
- *Previews*
- *Rolling Stone*
- *Spin*
- *Sports Illustrated*
- *Spy*
- *Starlog*
- *Tuff Stuff*
- *TV Guide*
- *Warp*
- *Wired*

24. WHAT IS THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION YOU HAVE REACHED SO FAR?

- grade 1-6
- grade 7-9
- grade 10-12
- graduated high school
- some college
- graduated college
- graduate degree

25. IF YOU WERE THE NEFARIOUS MOLE MAN, WHAT COUNTRY/CONTINENT WOULD YOU SINK TO THE EARTH'S MOLTEN CORE?

_____

Either rip out these pages or photocopy 'em. Whatever floats your boat. Send to:

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Address _____

City _____

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Date of birth _____

*COLORS MAY VARY. YOU'LL GET WHATEVER WE HAVE IN STOCK AND LIKE IT!

WizaRd BullPen

SEASON'S END

It was the last game of the season, and as if that wasn't enough, we faced off against Wow Comics, one of two teams that handed us our heads this season. So, swallowing hard, and determined to make sure that we didn't repeat our losing performance, the grimy Wizard softball team took the field and, from the looks of it, had the game all sewn up...until Wow came back and tied it up in the seventh inning. Then disaster struck, as Wow scored two runs in the top of the 14th (yes, *14th*), makin' us crap in our shorts and putting our backs against the wall. It wasn't over yet, though, as sweat and perseverance did the job, and the Wizard crew rallied to score three runs in the bottom of the inning, wrapping up the season on a high note. This capped our season at 13-2, and hey, we'll be back next year. Maybe even with a name for our team.

WIZARD vs. WIZARD

Well, sort of. Seeing as how the softball season has come to an end, a handful of hard-bitten, tough-as-nails *Wizard* staffers challenged some staffers from our sister publication, *Collector's Sportslook*, to a grueling bowling match. With a dinner on the losers as the stakes, *Wizard* Editor-in-Chief Pat McCallum, Editor Brian Cunningham, Contributing Editor Marc Wilkofsky, and Copy Editor (and secret ace-in-the-hole...or so we thought) Andrew Kardon strapped on the necessary bowling apparatus and, much like the gladiators of ancient Rome, sallied forth into the local bowling arena. Our opponents? *Sportslook* Editor-in-Chief Tucker Freeman Smith, Associate Editor Scott Gramling, Associate Publisher Stephen Shamus, and News Editor (and frequent *Wizard* contributor) Jim McLauchlin. So what happened? In our best out-of-three tournament, *Sportslook* spanked us two straight, 525-404 and 577-462. Then, in a display of arrogance that has become his trademark, Tucker put both wins on the line for a third game, the winner taking all. So, in a heated third game that made a certain *SL* editor regret his words, *Wizard* rallied, took like a 30-point lead that lasted four frames...but choked and fell apart in the final frames, losing 490-486. A rematch, this time in miniature golf, is comin' up real soon. We'll kick their asses yet...

UP CLOSE...

Jim McLauchlin
Magic Words writer, *Wizard: The Guide To Comics*

What is it you do at *Wizard*?
I read through all the mail, select the letters that go in Magic Words, write all the replies, play first base and bat 8th for the Wizard softball team, and let people sit in my big papasan chair.

Your favorite section in *Wizard*?
CBIQ.

What is the one thing you'd like all the Magic Words readers to learn?
To address Customer Service complaints to Customer Service, that the Price Guide is the least important section in *Wizard*, to not be afraid to read new stuff once in a while, and that I love 'em all.

Last good movie you saw?
Cool Hand Luke.

Last good book you read?
Prodigal Genius, a biography of Nikola Tesla by John Joseph O'Neill.

What would your biography be called?
True Tales of the East Side: The Jim McLauchlin Story.

Favorite TV show?
CNN *Headline News*. I'm a news junkie.

Favorite musical performers?
Neil Young—solo, acoustic, or with Crazy Horse.

What would play you in a movie?
After much consultation with others, John Mellencamp with a haircut, Dwight Yoakam after being beefed up by about 30 pounds, or Curtis Armstrong, who played Booger in *Revenge of the Nerds*.

Actress with whom you'd like to star in a film?
Carly Simon (she had a cameo in *Perfect*).

Favorite comic right now?
Sandman Mystery Theatre.

Favorite comic of all time?
The Metamorphosis Odyssey, by Jim Starlin, which was serialized in the first eight issues of *Epic Illustrated.*

What are/were your nicknames?
Jimmy the Fish, Jimmy 99, Jolly Jimbo McLunchbox, and Bunny.

What superpower would you want, and why?
In all honesty, none. It would make life too easy. Anything worth having is worth working for; if you have to work for something, you appreciate it more.

Top 10 real reasons Marvel is canceling all the X-Men titles:

10. The coin landed on tails.
9. New editorial staff having trouble spelling "X."
8. "Excelsior!" is Latin for "Boy, we've milked this baby dry!"
7. Unannounced *Zero Hour* epilogue.
6. Evil monkeys.
5. Marvel inter-office game of "Truth or Dare" got way, way out of control (though this does explain the Spider-Clone and Fantastic Force).
4. Euthanasia.
3. Assistant Editor's Month never really ended.
2. To see if anyone would notice.
1. Because the whole idea of an alternate dimension/time travel/alternate reality version of the X-Men was something new, something that had never been done before.

✓ **COLLECTOR'S SPORTSLOOK #14** This month in *Collector's Sportslook*, it's **Joe Montana** like you've never seen him before. Forget about all the touchdowns and Super Bowl rings. We're talking about Joe as a kid. We've got a picture of him in bell bottoms, and one where you'd swear he was passed out drunk. Even the cover features Joe's elementary school photo! And if that's not cool enough, the January issue has **two awesome X-Men trading cards** and **four great contests**. Remember, *Sportslook* is out to change the way you look at cards, and this month, we're changing the way you look at Joe Montana, too! **$3.95**

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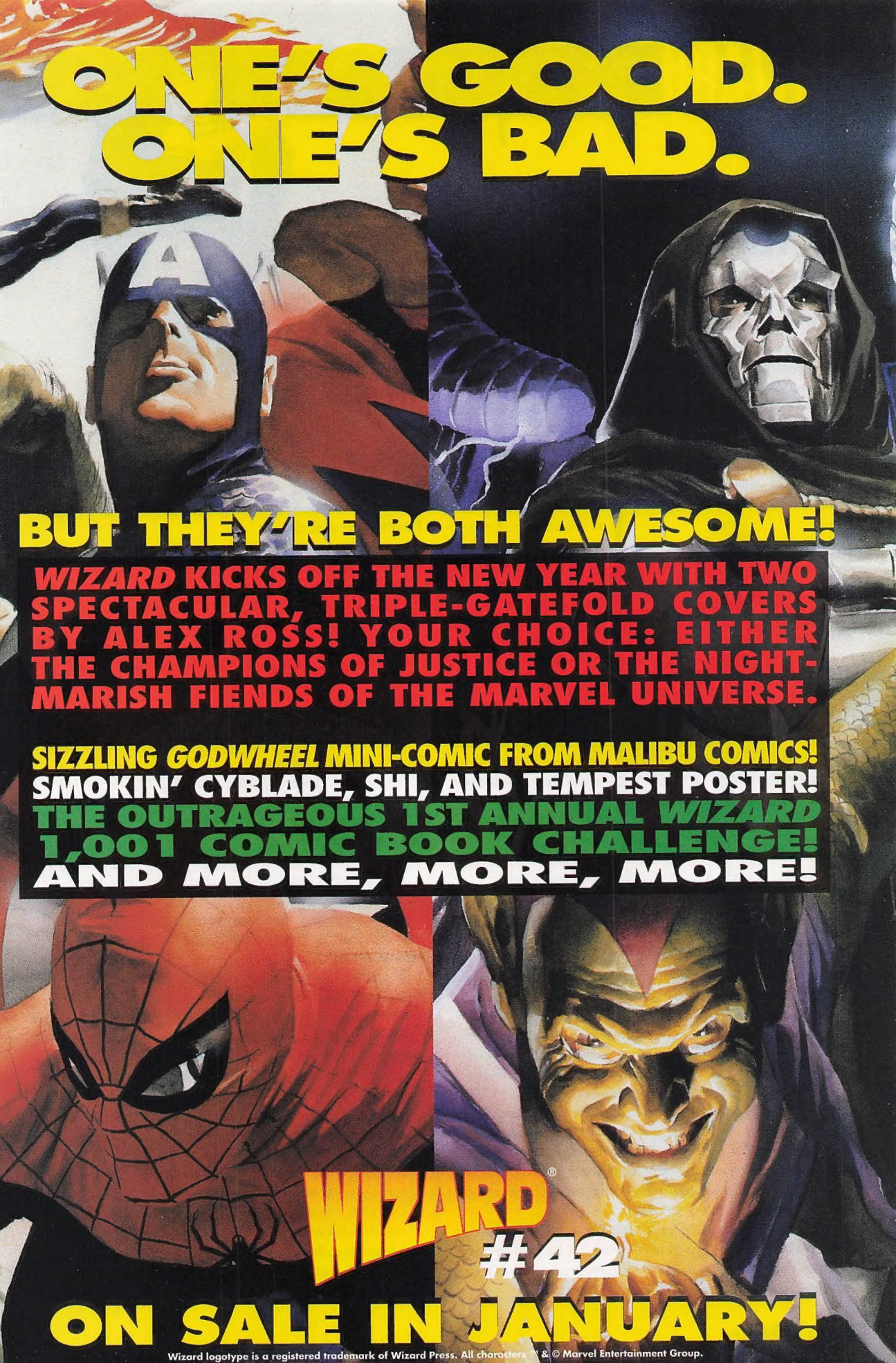
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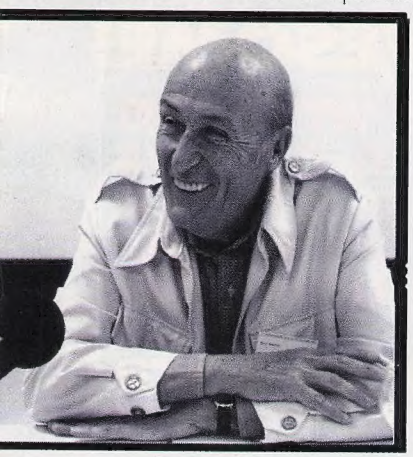
WIZARD *Profile*

Here's looking at... WILL EISNER

by William Christensen & Mark Seifert

Despite his taking a 20-year break from comics during the '50s and '60s, one would be hard-pressed to find someone who has more experience in the industry than Will Eisner. A comic professional since the age of 19, back in 1936, Eisner truly has done it all when it comes to comics.

Eisner grew up in New York City and didn't waste any time putting his artistic talents to work. His first work was at a newspaper, and he later did artwork for a print shop. Eventually, his talents led him to his first comic work at *Wow What A Magazine!*, where he met businessman Jerry Iger, a man with whom he would make a fortune through guts and hard work in the blossoming comic industry.



"I said this was an opportunity, because [comic publishers] would be running out of material with the daily strips pretty soon and needing some original material. I talked [Iger] into starting a company with me."

Initially, that company consisted simply of Iger drumming up business while Eisner drew the comics. But the company grew in size and number as both had a true comic production "shop," in which the Eisner/Iger studio packaged comic books for new publishers.

In his next business endeavors, artist/writer/businessman Eisner set in motion circumstances for himself that are still considered radical and daring: he created what became an immensely popular character in The Spirit , retained ownership of it, and then developed more characters which he hired other artists to draw. *The Spirit* started out in 1940 as a feature in a comic book-like Sunday newspaper section.

In 1952 he left the comics field to start the American Visual Corporation, which created government training and instructional manuals. He became interested in comics again around 1972, and in 1974-75 he began creating what many consider the first comic book graphic novel, *Contract With God*, which was published in 1978.

He's been going strong in comics ever since, and believes there are older readers around the age of 45 or 50 that are ready for more adult material. "I think that is where the future of comics is, in the adults. That is what gave me the encouragement to go on. I've never regretted it. In fact, the last 20 years—as far as I'm concerned—are the best productive years of my life."

Eisner says that his next graphic novel, about "the rise and decline and death of a neighborhood in the Bronx," is his most ambitious work to date. Two years in the making, the project, titled *Dropsie Avenue*, is due in January from Kitchen Sink Press.

The Spirit ™ & © Will Eisner. Photo courtesy of Will Eisner Studios.

First comic book read...

I grew up on comic strips...George Herriman's *Krazy Kat* and *Popeye*.

Favorite comic of all time...

I guess [Art Spiegelman's] *Maus* does it for me.

Favorite work of your own...

Well, the last piece of work I did is always my favorite—until it gets published.

Person you'd most like to meet...

I never have met Carl Barks. I wrote a forward to his book [*Walt Disney's Uncle Scrooge*, published by Another Rainbow], but I never did meet him.

Things you collect...

A few years ago, I began acquiring African art. I believe it has so much of a relationship to comic art, because of its impressionistic quality.

Favorite pastime or hobby...

I play tennis. I keep very active, travel a lot.

Favorite television show...

I watch a lot of CNN. I watch tennis a lot.

Last good book you read...

I find the works of Joseph Campbell, on mythology, fascinating. The last light fiction book I read was *The Firm*, by John Grisham.

Last good movie you saw...

The last interesting movie I saw was *The Snapper*. I know I shouldn't say this, because it's not culturally correct, but I enjoyed *Forrest Gump*.

Favorite cartoon...

My all-time favorite is Disney's *Fantasia*.

Person you'd most like to work with...

I'm constantly confronted with that, and I'm always sad, because I don't want whoever I turn down to think that I'm turning them down because I think any less of them. I find it very hard to work with anybody but myself. I can't, to this day, work on someone else's writing.

Favorite musical performers...

I like good instrumentation jazz, and I'm still thrilled by the big bands—Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller.

Why do you read *Wizard*?

Because *Wizard* is a phenomenon—it seems to have its finger on the pulse of the new world [and] the people coming into it. *Wizard* represents a new generation. It has captured, very cleverly, very astutely, what is now a whole new form of reading. It is representing something that is happening to our literacy. Comics is now taking its place between text and film. *Wizard* has caught the rhythm of it, which is what makes me so interested in what it is doing. ☆

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